

#03



あま

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A m a g i B r i l l i a n t P a r k

賀東招二

Illustrator
なかじまゆか



ファンタジア文庫

Amagi Brilliant Park

vol.3

by Gatou Shouji

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甘城

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Tiramie's Fantasy Time!

Sento Isuzu

Head of the secretariat of Amaburi, and First Royal Guard of Maple Land's imperial regiment.
[Where's her prince on a white horse that would bring a smile to her face, mi?]

Chujou Shiina

Part-timer.
[Moffie, her boss, has taken a liking to her, mi.]

Adachi Eiko

Part-timer.
[An ex-actress who joined us, mi. She makes the beasts in our park go WILD, mi.]

Latifa

The princess of Maple Land, and manager of Amaburi.
[She's awesome at making croquettes, mi.]

Muse

Cast member, and the fairy of water.
[Her normal attire is surprisingly conservative, mi.]

Bandou Biino

Part-timer.
[Her best feature is the blood that flows from her waist, mi...]

Tiramie

[I'm the fairy of flowers, mi. Presenting to you, my fantasy change room scene!]







Kanie Seiya

A high schooler serving as the acting manager of Amaburi.

He's always so arrogant and prideful; wonder what's going on over there?

Tsuchida Kanae and gang don't seem very happy about this...

I'm very sorry

Macaron

Moffle

Tiramie



KYAAA



Prologue

A loud trumpet sound filled the area, and pieces of confetti released from above danced their way down. Following that, a cheerful melody played, welcoming the dancers who entered the stage in brightly colored outfits. The dancers spun around, with their tails drawing a nice arc.

Welcome to the land of paradise, a realm of adventure that transcends even time and space!

Yes, that's right! It's Amagi Brilliant Park! Come on, put on your smiles and cheer with us! If you cheer loudly enough, our mascots might notice and come over! Let us begin with the first: Macaron, the fairy of music! Everyone, let's shout together! Macaron! Macaron!

"Ron!"

Macaron, the fairy of music, appeared. He rocketed from below the stage and landed at the centre. Following that, he began with a bagpipe solo before being joined by more dancers.

Guess who's next? That's right! It's Tiramie, the fairy of flowers! Let's shout together once more! Tiramie! Tiramie!

"Mi!"

Tiramie, the fairy of flowers, appeared. Just like Macaron, he kicked off and landed on the stage with a spin. He took off his silk hat and performed a magic trick with flowers growing from it. With a wave of his wand, the flowers flew out and scattered

around the stage. Once again, more dancers joined in.

Featuring our beloved mascots from Sorcerers' Hill! Let us smile and welcome them all on stage!

More of Amagi Brilliant Park's mascots appeared and join in. Things became livelier and livelier.

But wait! Aren't we missing something?

Yes, that's right! Sweets! We're missing sweets! Everyone, let's cheer once more for Moffle, the fairy of sweets! Moffle! Moffle!

"Mofu!"

Moffle, the fairy of sweets, appeared on a tall platform, and an array of colorful fireworks welcomed his arrival. The amount of bling used for his entrance spoke volumes about his significance as the lead mascot for the park.

Everything up until now had been close to perfect, but— The fireworks ignited Moffle's chef's hat, setting it ablaze. *"Mofu! Mofu...!"*

God knew whether Moffle had realized it or not. Regardless, he readied himself and jumped towards a hidden trampoline.

Moffle did quick spins during his flight. He had been doing everything as scripted, but his abrupt actions caused the fire to spread to his clothing.

"Mofu!!!"

It appeared like Moffle had finally realized what was going on.

Moffle, who was now in flames, fell down to the stage. The scene became increasingly chaotic—seeing the lead mascot ablaze and crashing down, the dancers blanked out, forgetting their script, and fled off the stage. All of that was being accompanied by some inappropriate cheerful music.

As Moffle ran around in flames, he trampled over the “Talking Flowers” props and banged into a speaker, shouting in pain.

Amidst his writhing, the confetti also began to catch fire. “Ouch, so hot! HOT!!! SOMEONE HELP!”

“Don’t move! Someone bring a blanket!”

“The fire extinguisher! Where is it, *pi!*? Where is the fire extinguisher!?”

The stage that used to be full of joy and fun turned into a terrible mess. Cast members grabbed the fire extinguisher with paled faces and took aim.

Full blast—

White smoke shot out of the nozzle, enveloping the whole area.

*

5 minutes after the fire was extinguished—

“...This is precisely why I suggested we stop the fireworks!”

Kanie Seiya, who had recently gotten the extra job of “firefighting,” shouted at the cast members. His uniform had been terribly bleached by the extinguisher’s powder.

“We’re lucky this is just a rehearsal. What if this happened in

the real performance? We'd be on television for the wrong reasons! Videos of our pathetic stunts would be uploaded to YouTube and we'd be laughing stocks!"

"Hmm, but won't that make us popular, *ron*?" Macaron wondered.

"Yeah, we'd *explode* in popularity, *mi*! Hah, get it?" Tiramie jested.

"This isn't a joke, guys. We're nearing the performance date, and we can't afford to mess this up. If we do, our visitor count after Golden Week will be affected. You do know that it's a very important performance for us, don't you?"

The show they were rehearsing for was titled "A(maburi)-fight begins! The descendent of Earth, Moffle." It was scheduled to be performed in Amaburi's central stage during its all-important event on Golden Week. The organizing of this show was a part of their plans to reorganize their lineup of events.

Historically speaking, Amagi Brilliant Park had never held a live show on a scale as big as this. Most of them were routining 10-minute skits and dances done at intervals during the park's operating hours. One of the management's restructuring plans was to host larger-scale shows like this. The performance alone would involve almost all of its performers, and they'd be up on stage for about 50 minutes at a time. In order for this to work, the cast members had to compose new songs, prepare new props, and even design new costumes. It was no surprise that this event would become a gold sink for them—a lot of money

went into the resources consumed and advertisements. Nonetheless, Seiya did not hesitate one bit when approving the expenditure.

As such, this performance was of great importance to them. It would be an announcement that Amagi Brilliant Park was no longer the run-down, out-of-date theme park it used to be—a chance to open their visitors' eyes and fix their impressions of the park.

Of course, in order for that to happen, they ought to shine. They could not afford to let their guests leave with a “meh.” They had to deliver so well that their guests walk out telling their friends “It was awesome!” After all, word-of-mouth advertisements never fail. But despite all that effort put into planning—

“This is ridiculous? Which act would involve lead performers catching fire and falling down!?”

“Seiya, I understand your concerns, *fumo*.” Moffle looked like he just came back from the sick bay. His chef's apron had been burnt completely black, and his fur was completely white due to the extinguisher powder. His footsteps were rather unsteady, hinting that he might have suffered quite some emotional trauma earlier as well. “However, we absolutely need the fireworks, *fumo*. We need to show them we're no longer old-fashioned. We need more oomph in our performances. If we don't at least give them a bright flare and a bang...”

“You already stressed its importance in the meeting. But look at how it turned out.”

“Hah! This kind of battlefield is nothing, *fumo*. We’ve experienced this countless times in the past.”

This isn’t a battlefield, and you’re a mascot now, in case you haven’t noticed...

“It’s okay, we learnt our lesson. I’ll be sure to add fire retardants to our clothing and flammables so that this won’t happen again, *fumo*.”

Seiya sighed. He had certainly understood Moffle’s intentions. However, he was the acting manager of the park and had to analyze the situation from a broad perspective. If he were to choose between flashiness and safety, he’d have to pick the latter.

But then again...

“I second Moffle’s opinion, *ron*. We need to step up our game and include this,” Macaron added.

“Me too, *mi*. In fact, it’s a good thing this happened during the rehearsal, so we know how to improve on this,” said Tiramie.

“We think so too, *mogu*. Let’s use this opportunity to iron out all the flaws in our performance.”

“Well, we don’t need to go overboard though, *neru*.”

“If our guests enjoy it, then shouldn’t we go all out to deliver?” Taramo, Dornel, and Wrench-kun spoke.

“Hmph...”

I guess if they’re so insistent, I should just put some faith in them

and take the risk...

“Very well. We’ll strive to achieve minimal risk and design safety measures. All departments are to submit a report tomorrow at 9. Should I determine that the safety concerns outweigh our benefits, the fireworks will be abolished. Think you can do it?”

“Of course!” Everyone shouted. That was surprising, considering they were all hiding around like cowards earlier. The mascots were small, but had pupils that sparkled brighter than any ray of hope.

“Good. Let’s clean this place up and go back to square one.”

Seiya observed the rehearsal from the audience’s seat. Because there were no fireworks this time around, Moffle’s act proceeded smoothly without any problems.

“Kanie-kun.”

Isuzu, who was holding on to a file of documents, sat beside him and spoke. “I heard the story from Wrench-kun. Must’ve been a hectic day for you.”

“It was a catastrophe. I’m thankful they actually still have the drive to continue with this.”

Seiya gave his remark in a relaxed manner, but Isuzu stared at him from the side and asked.

“Is this really okay?” “Huh?”

“You haven’t told them about this year’s annual minimum visitor count yet, have you?”

Isuzu was referring to the sale of the 2nd park located south of the main park that solved their financial problems. In exchange for Amagi Development’s approval of the transaction, they had increased the minimum visitor count to 3,000,000. Essentially, Amagi Brilliant Park would cease to be if they failed to attract 3,000,000 guests by the end of the fiscal year.

To be honest, it was an insane number. Of course, the top amusement parks could get 20,000,000 visitors without breaking a sweat, but things weren’t that simple—only a few Japanese amusement parks could even approach that number. Amagi Brilliant Park would have to leap from “barely in the top 50” to “in the top 5” in Japan.

Ridiculous as it may seem, they had no choice but to aim for it. Otherwise, they wouldn’t even be able pay this month’s wages.

“Now’s not the time to inform them,” Seiya affirmed. “First, we raise their morale. Then, we talk. I ought to earn their trust before breaking such deathly news to them.”

“You think they’ll believe in us?”

“We’re finished if they don’t.”

Chapter 1: Chuujou Shiina Calls it Quits!

Part 1

I have long acknowledged that I am just an average, boring teenage girl.

I stand 140 centimeters tall, and weigh 35 kilograms (no, I'm not lame enough to go around pretending it's a secret). Pretty much the average profile of any elementary school student, and because of that, I get mistaken for one very often. But don't worry. I, Chuujou Shiina, am a bona fide high schooler! Sorry, I jest.

I blame this partly on the Uniqlo and Shimamura clothes Mom always buys for me, and partly on the fact that I have been going to the same barber ever since I was a kid. I once brought my New Year's present money to Shibuya in hopes of buying some girlish clothes (such as CECIL McBEE!), but their clothes were all too big and I ended up leaving empty-handed.

Naturally, I got lost and was taken to the police station. Utterly disgraceful.

Once again, while it may not look like it, I am actually a splendid high schooler! Sorry, I jest (for the second time). Besides, several of my distinct features show otherwise, and I'm not as talkative or flirty as my counterparts.

In short, I don't mix well with others. I'm not exactly sure when

this problem started, but I always stammer when I talk to others face-to-face. My thoughts usually end up manifesting as “uh,” “erm,” or just a string of repeated apologies. In fact, many schoolmates have approached with eyes looking down on me (both physically and mentally), and seeing my struggle with words eventually bored them and made them leave.

Of course, out of self-pity and embarrassment, such encounters always make me want to cry – though, I usually end up crying anyway...

In an attempt to change for the better, I enrolled myself into Amagi High. I guess you could call it a “Highschool Debut,” huh! My height was a predetermined parameter that I could do nothing about, but at the very least I could change my character. I’d make lots and lots of friends and enjoy a fulfilling school life for once.

I changed my hairstyle, researched the latest fashion and accessories, rented DVDs teaching me how to smile properly, and even studied what makes a conversation tick. After some begging, Mom also taught me how to wear proper make-up. I was all set!

Despite all that, I failed.

I stammered and blew the self-introduction, and couldn’t find anyone sitting near me who had similar interests or outlooks on life. A classmate who had what I’d consider a leader’s personality was kind enough to strike a conversation with me, but because I had yet to master the techniques in the smiling

DVD, she didn't even greet me 3 days later. How disgraceful of me.

Somehow, I managed to make friends with a classmate who was in a similar situation as mine. However, she joined the biology club and ended up spending most of her free time during lunch and after classes in the club room. Our conversations now ended after greetings were exchanged.

And just like that, a week had passed. This is bad. Like, really bad.

Since I couldn't make any friends in class, I considered joining a club just like her. People said the biology club would suit me perfectly, but alas, I could not bring myself to suffocate in a room that was stinking of formalin.

In the first place, Amagi High held night classes, so the students need to leave school early. As such, the clubs in our school weren't very active either. Even then, I'd wished countless times for our school to have a cozy "Cultural Studies" club just like in anime. But again, Amagi High had none of those. I also lacked the vigor and drive to gather applicants and create one for the school.

And so, after dawdling around, another week had passed. This is bad. Like, REALLY bad.

At this rate, I'm making a full dash towards a splendidly lonely lifestyle—no actually, I think I'm already there...

Having lunch by myself in class was starting to get increasingly

painful. I considered eating in the toilet, but just thinking of it tripped my hygiene alarm. And so, I headed for the flight of stairs near the east block. The door to the rooftop on the fourth floor was sealed shut, and the area was used as storage for unused items. Perhaps I could eat my lunch there?

Surprisingly, someone was already there.

The sophomore was munching on his curry bun and tapping away on his phone in displeasure, muttering things like “we’re lacking in funds” and “looks like we really have to...”

To be honest, he looked really cool. His appearance was like a beautifully illustrated piece of art, having black hair with finely drawn facial features. His elegance spoke volumes about his intellect and burning will.

Why is he all alone and talking to himself in a place like this? Way too uncool for a cool guy like him!

“Hmm...?”

Realizing that I was there, the boy stiffened. He must have felt uneasy that he’d been spotted dining alone here. To be fair, I would have reacted the same way if I were in his shoes.

“Um...Uh...”

I wanted to at least apologize for scaring him. However, I could not muster the courage to say such difficult words.

But hey, wait a minute! Wasn’t this a perfect opportunity for me? I mean, think of it this way...

A lonely maiden, after chancing upon a boy facing a similar predicament at a corner of the school, ends up having lunch and chatting with him daily...

No, no, no. My heart's not ready for it yet!

The girl would eventually end up preparing boxed lunches for him, and even when she messed up the eggs, he'd say "Anything you make is delicious." And slowly, but surely...

Right then, the boy spoke. "This is my territory. Get lost."

...Sorry?

"You heard me, hurry up and scram. I'm sure you were thinking you could become good friends with a handsome guy like me, weren't you?"

What a guess. What is he, an ESPer? A Newtype? "Things like this happen often, but I regret to say I have

absolutely no interest in you, especially since I have my hands full with work at the moment. I still have a lot of PDFs to read, so hurry up and get out of my sight."

"U-Um..."

"Must I really repeat this once more? Get lost! Now!" "S-S-S-S-S-S-S-Sorry!"

I stammered again. How disgraceful. Unable to retort, I turned around and fled the scene.

*

Today was awful.

And whenever I had a horrible day, I would always treat myself to a session of karaoke after school. After washing my sadness away with about 20 anisongs, I felt a lot better. On the way out, the receptionist shot a look at me and said “You’re really good at singing, you know?” Of course, that was just their standard lip service. I forced out an “Uh...Um... T-T-T-Tha...(nk you)” and left.

I’d accepted the fact that I had no friends in school. I did not belong anywhere—not even in the elite loner’s corner which was occupied by that scary senior.

If that was the case, was there anything I could do outside of school?

Yes! A part-time job! I’d have a blast working, make good friends, and even wear cute uniforms! If I could just secure a good part-time job, I would at least have somewhere to unwind after a day’s worth of suffering. Furthermore, I’d also get some pocket money, killing two birds with one stone!

Having decided that, I hurriedly searched for some part-time jobs through recruitment sites. There were many job openings available, such as at fast food restaurants, family restaurants, and even stylish cafés! More results appeared as I searched. I’ve never worked a part-time job, but it should be fine. Do your best, Shiina!

*

.....It was a disaster.

Every job recruitment was bound to have an interview stage. There was no way for me, who would choke and stammer in something as trivial as a self-introduction at school, to answer the interviewer's questions coherently. The fact that they all looked so scary did not help.

I was rejected by all job positions that were suitable for students. How disgraceful...

And so, once again, I went for some karaoke to rid myself of the day's sadness.

I might have messed up the interviews, but I wasn't going to give up just yet. I'd search for more. There was one final job opening that had favorable conditions—in a theme park.

The park was located within the town own Amagi, called "Amagi Brilliant Park." I remember my parents bringing me there when I was a kid (I think I still am, though). There was a mascot named Moffle who was really cute, and he was my favorite. He's still my favorite to this day; I even have a Moffle plushie on my bed.

This must be my calling! I must have been rejected by all of them so that I could join the park!

I applied immediately. I'd experienced enough of the [Interview>Rejected] cycle that I was no longer afraid (ignoring the fact that I spent 3 hours struggling to write the application email for it).

I received a reply from a representative on the same day, stating the date and time of my interview.

*

It was the big day. To make sure I wouldn't be late, I left for the park early!

I also got on the wrong bus!

I ended up at some unknown hill, and controlled my tears as I rushed back, 2 hours late for the interview.

I was really, really late. Chances were that they'd reject me on the spot, but I figured I should at least show up and apologize. It looked like all the other applicants had already left, but there were still people in the interview room.

(Hey, where should I mop?)

(Hand it to me, I'll do the mopping.)

It sounded like two staff members were busy cleaning up the place. I wasn't sure who the female was, but I definitely recognized the voice of the guy. He was none other than that cool senior I met at the loner's corner!

So he was actually working in the park as well, huh. He's really cool, but very scary. I couldn't help but feel uneasy. I was super late, after all.

"Erm... Is this the venue for the job interview?"

"You are?"

The boy spoke. He sounded really exhausted. The interviews

must have taken a toll on him.

“Chuujou Shiina. I applied for a job here, sorry for being late.”

I did my best. It was a miracle I didn't stammer. If only I could be like this during the actual interview...

“Something came up, so we postponed the interview. But either way, we're not hiring you.”

“E-Eh!? Why?”

“Because of labor laws. We can't hire elementary school kids.” “Huh, b-but I'm...”

Because of the shock, I reverted to my bad habit of stammering. Utterly disgraceful.

“The exit's the other way. Thanks for your interest.”

I was utterly dumbfounded. Ignoring the fact that I just got mistaken for an elementary school student again, the boy did not seem to remember me at all.

Just when I needed it most! If only he could say something like “Ah, you're the one who...” or “Have we met before?” I would've been able to follow up and save my interview!

In manga, couples with bad encounters who bump into each other tend to get really unpleasant, but it didn't seem like this was going to happen between him and I. To this guy, I was a person who was worth forgetting after meeting for the first time—essentially just a side character of a show! How disgraceful!

I might have wanted to wail and run out of the room, but I am actually a high schooler! Sorry, I jest (for the third time now). I suppressed my agony and left. That alone was an amazing feat. You did well, Shiina!

I stopped by for some karaoke on the way back. Singing 10 vocaloid songs wasn't enough to rid me of my sadness, so I continued to pour my soul into 20 *enka* ballad songs. I sang until I attained the calmness of the Tsugaru Strait in winter.

Once again, the receptionist complimented me, saying that I was "damn good at singing, no kidding." It was getting hard for me to tolerate their sweet-talking business; hopefully they'd stop it soon.

When I got home, I cried and explained the situation to Mom, and thanks to that, I got the rare opportunity to sleep with her for the night.

*

The next day, I caught wind of a rumor spreading among the girls. It seemed that the senior I bumped into was Kanie Seiya. It wasn't surprising for a hot guy like him to become the topic of conversation among the first year students. After all, his grades were top-notch, and he excelled at both arts and sports.

However, it is said that his rude attitude towards people was why he had no friends. I guess I wasn't the only victim of Kanie Seiya's wrath. I couldn't help but feel a little disappointed though. If his cold attitude were directed towards only me, I might actually graduate from being just another side character

in a story.

It seemed like Kanie Seiya-senpai was always together with Sento Isuzu-senpai, who was also a sophomore in Amagi High. I'd hear rumors about the two of them dating each other every once in a while, but I didn't buy that. (But only because it's just a rumor. I won't believe this until I see it for myself.)

On that day, Sento Isuzu-senpai called me over. When she came over to my class and called my name, everyone was shocked.

God knows how my classmates knew about her, but they were whispering among themselves, saying things like "H-Hey, is that Sento-senpai!? Isn't she pretty?"

This might be embarrassing, but I tend to panic whenever I catch the attention of others.

But putting that aside, Sento Isuzu-senpai was the girl who was cleaning up the interview room with him yesterday. She was really pretty, and had a really good sense of style. I'm by no means into yuri, but I couldn't help but have my breath taken away when I saw her.

"You're Chuujou Shiina-san, right?"

Sento-senpai spoke, skipping the self-introduction. I, on the other hand, could do nothing but gape and nod my head.

"I sent you an email last night. Did you read it?" "Eh? Erm..."

Come to think of it, I was worn out and mentally scarred, so I didn't check my email last night. Besides, most of the emails I

received were advertisements from the karaoke bar I often visit and random spam from dating sites. LINE? What's that? Is it edible?

"I'm guessing not."

"Erm... N-No..."

"I apologize for the rash act of my manager yesterday. We were facing some problems, so please forgive us."

"O-Okay..."

"I don't think I have the right to talk about this after causing so much trouble for you, but..."

I'm confused. Just what message did she have that would justify coming all the way down to see me personally? A word of apology? Or maybe a stern warning to "stay away from my Kanie-kun"?

"...but if you still wish to join us, would you like to attend the interview again?"

"E-Erm..."

This was certainly troubling. I was so late for yesterday's interview, to the extent that I had no right to complain about being rejected.

"Of course, we're only conducting the interview for formality's sake. It won't take too much of your time. Are you free now?"

"E-Erm...yes..."

It sucked that I couldn't say anything other than "erm..." and

“yes...” I should have tried harder and said something else, like “Dashe zanna (Falbani for ‘thank you’).” Then again, I guess I’d be better off not saying it.

“Okay. Come with me.”

I followed Isuzu to a corner of the east block, where Kanie-senpai stood waiting.

“I brought her with me.”

“Wow, I never thought you were actually a high schooler...”

Seiya commented as he observed my appearance. He certainly wasn’t looking at me with lecherous eyes; they were more like those of a person who was picking a bike to buy in a store. Then again, it was rather rude of him to do that, but I couldn’t deny the fact that he looked really cool doing it. How frustrating.

“I’m sorry about yesterday. If you don’t mind, I’d like to get this interview over with right here.”

“S-Sorry?”

“Your probation will be two weeks. During this period, your hourly wage will be 750 yen. I see that you indicated interest in the merchandise and F&B department, but if possible, I’d like you to work as an assistant actor. Saturdays will be full time, and we operate on a closed shift system on weekdays, with a minimum of three work days. If you agree to these conditions, you’re hired. What do you think?”

“Erm... W-Well...”

Just who are these two people? How do they get to decide if I get hired or not?

“Will you do it, or not?” “Erm... I...”

“Not gonna do it?”

“Yes... Erm I mean...no...”

“So which is it? Make it quick.”

Kanie-senpai was starting to get frustrated with my indecisiveness.

“I-I-I-I-I-I’ll chew it!!”

I shouted with all my might, mispronouncing a word along the way. How disgraceful.

By the way, I’d meant to say “I’ll do it,” realizing that this was my last chance to change myself. No way was I going to repeat my middle school lifestyle. Kanie-senpai was really scary, and Sento-senpai seemed intimidating. Nonetheless, I wasn’t going to run away. Not anymore.

The two of them stood still momentarily, seemingly shocked by the volume of my voice.

“You’ll...chew it? So which is it?”

“Probably neither of the two...”

“Or did she just use an Arabic word or something?”

The two of them conferred among themselves. I figured I

should clarify myself.

“I’ll...I’ll...chew it! No, I’ll Jew it! I’ll do my pest!!”

I meant to say “I’ll do it” and “I’ll do my best,” but for some reason it ended up like that. Now they must be appalled by my choice of words.

Thankfully, Sento-senpai seemed to have gotten what I was trying to say, and prompted me further.

“I’m guessing you want to do it?” “Y-
Yes...”

“Then that’s settled. I’ll see you this weekend.”

Saying that, Kanie-senpai began to walk away, stopping for a brief moment to ask me a question.

“Actually...have we met before?” “Y-
Yes, at the stairs...”

“Hmm whatever. Just don’t be late.”

And just like that, he left the place. He shouldn’t have even asked if he had no intention to listen! How annoying!!

Sento-senpai watched him leave before speaking to me. “I understand how you feel.”

Right then, I knew I would be good friends with her.

Anyway, this marked the beginning of my journey as a staff member of Amagi Brilliant Park.

Part 2

I was to start work at 9 am that very weekend. After entering via the entrance reserved for staff members—or cast members, according to the park’s terminology—I received my ID card from the guard house. Ookuro-san, the security guard in charge, had a rather dubious appearance, but somehow gave off a friendly vibe.

Sento-senpai had emailed me the instructions on what to do on my first day at work. First, I headed for the meeting room, where they would be holding the training course for the newbies.

There were about 20 other people in the room. I seemed to be the only high schooler, with about half of them being university students or older. Everyone seemed nervous, and so was I. That was only normal, given that it was our first day here. There was one, however, who did not appear to be panicking at all.

The woman, apparently named Adachi Eiko, had an elegant and calm demeanor. I overheard people around me talking about how she was an ex-AV idol.

Wait, hold on.

An AV idol!? You mean...*that* kind of AV, and not some Armored Valkyrie or whatever!?

“I wonder why people are so shocked to see me...”

Seeing how I tensed up in shock upon realization, Eiko-san sighed.

Amazing! Was this a normal phenomenon? The mere fact that a working adult was sitting beside me made me feel all grown up, as if I had just graduated from being a school kid. Thank you!

Several minutes later, another girl entered the room and sat beside me. She looked about the same age as me. Probably a high school student, as well. The girl, named Bandou Biino, had short hair that gave off an energetic appearance, and she went around greeting people with a “Nice to meet you!” and shaking hands with them. Of course, I could only respond with an “Erm...” but this time I had a legitimate reason for doing so— she was wearing pajamas and had fresh blood all over her hands.

“I escaped from the hospital because today’s the all-important training! Looks like my wound reopened, hahaha...”

Don’t “hahaha” at me! The side of your pajamas is turning dark red. And look! Your face is turning pale!

“D-Don’t worry about me! This kind of wound should heal with more exercise...*cough*!”

Before I could recover from the shock, Biino-san collapsed. Cast members rushed in and brought her away in a stretcher.

The security guard stepped in.

“My apologies. Uh...the training should begin soon, so please stay calm and wait a little longer.” Saying that, he turned around and left.

Naturally, there was no way we could keep calm after

witnessing such an incident (with the exception of Eiko-san, who was able to remain seated without so much as a shiver). Some of the newcomers turned pale and ran out of the room. I tried my best not to join them.

Shortly afterwards, the trainers entered.

They called themselves “trainers,” but they seemed more like cast members who were tasked with teaching us the basics.

“Attention!”

With a shout, 3 mascots walked in.

The first one resembled a mouse. That’s Moffle, the fairy of sweets!

The second mascot had white fur and looked like a sheep. That’s Macaron, the fairy of music!

And the last one was Tiramie, the cute Pomeranian fairy of flowers!

They waddled into the room and stood in a straight line. “Woah...!”

Everyone stood up in astonishment. After all, they had just witnessed the entrance of 3 of Amagi Brilliant Park’s most famous mascots. They were mascots of a kiddie theme park, but even then it seemed like their popularity wasn’t to be underestimated.

They must have come to welcome us to the park, knowing that we were all feeling uneasy and nervous. I guess this park

actually cares about its workers, how impressive!

Were they going to perform for us? Or let us take a photograph with them? Everyone was really excited. And upon hearing our shouts of joy...

...the fairy of sweets punched the whiteboard with all his might, giving off a loud pulse that left our ears ringing.



“Silence, *fumo!*”

Moffle shouted in an unwelcoming tone.

We paused, not knowing what on earth had just happened.

“...What’s wrong? What’s up with those smirks on your faces? Or perhaps you haven’t realized that you’re no longer labelled a ‘visitor’?”

None of us spoke a word, and Moffle continued.

“Listen up, maggots. You abandoned your statuses the very moment you stepped into the park. You’re now the lowest life form in this place, inferior even to the grass we step on! From here on, we’re going to carve you into beings capable of entertaining our guests, to the point where you no longer remember how to laugh or cry!”

We stared blankly at Moffle, not because of his loud volume, but the sheer crudeness of his words.

“Our pleasure is your suffering, *fumo!* You’d better prepare yourself, for we’ll mess you all up and make you regret ever applying! Now then, let us begin the training!”

“Everyone stand up, *ron!* In formation!”

Macaron took over and shouted. Everyone snapped out of their confusion and lined up. I managed to get in formation on time, but a university student did not. He did not seem to be the kind who cared about following instructions.

“Hey, brown-haired shit face! Come over here, *fumo!*”

The man reluctantly obeyed and walked over, dragging his feet in a sloppy manner.

“Looks like we’ve got a dung beetle among the maggots, *fumo*. Where’s your hometown?”

“Hokkaido. ‘Sup?”

“Hokkaido? There’s nothing but cows and crabs there. Which are you?”

Moffle asked an unfair question. Naturally, the man lifted his eyebrows.

“Huh? The heck ‘ya talkin’ ‘bout?”

“Answer me, *fumo*! Cow, or crab!” “What am I s’posed to say...? Ow!”

Moffle struck the man, causing him to bend over in pain.

“You don’t respond to a question with another question! I’m giving you one last chance: Cow or crab!?”

“Wait—ugh...”

“You wanna lose a limb, kid!?” “C-Crab... Wait no, cow! A cow!”

“You’re a cow, huh? You’d better sound like one, *fumo*. I’d better hear moos now, you hear me? Moo!!!”

“M-Moo...”

“I don’t remember cows being so weak!! You’ll turn my granny off! Put more strength in your abdomen, again! Moo, moo!”

“Moo! Moo! Mooooo!”

“This guy has no strength. Make him practice, *fumo*.”

Tiramie grabbed him and dragged him to a corner. The man was already at the brink of tears. Seeing that made me want to cry, too.

“Listen carefully, maggots. We don’t tolerate half-assed work here. From now on, everything you say has to contain ‘sir,’ you hear me!?”

“S-Sir, yes sir...”

All of us let out an unsynchronized response. “It’s ‘Sir, yes sir!’, *ron!*”

“S...Sir, yes sir...”

“I can’t hear you! One more time, *mi!*” “Sir, yes sir!”

Everyone shouted with all their might. However, Moffle did not seem impressed.

“I don’t feel any emotion, *fumo*. How are you gonna entertain our guests like this!? People will call us a bunch of cowards!

We’ll lose our ratings!”

Cowards? Are our visitors terrorists? Perhaps because we’re acting like communists here?

After that, we were told that we’d have our abilities tested. They prepared 20kg loads for all of us and ordered us to run 20km.

At this point, we were all just finding an opportunity to escape. But just then, Kanie Seiya-senpai and Sento Isuzu-senpai walked into the room.

“What’re you doing, goddamned rat!?”

“*Mofu*...!?”

Kanie-senpai kicked Moffle in the ass.

“What are you doing interrupting my training, *fumo*!?” “That’s lame! You, a trainer?”

The two of them stared daggers at each other. It was apparent they didn’t mix well.

“*Mofu*... Might as well show them all who’s the boss!”

Moffle’s paws flew over. Senpai dodged. This cycle repeated a couple of times, causing tables to flip and chairs to fly. The newcomers scrambled around in an attempt to escape.

Sigh...just what have I gotten myself into this time?

All I wanted was a part-time job at a theme park. Why did I end up shivering in the corner of a room in such chaos? Just let me go home...

“Enough with your nonsense.”

Sento-senpai drew a musket out of nowhere and fired at Moffle and Kanie-senpai. They seemed to be alive but in great pain, suggesting that the bullet she used must’ve been special. I somehow managed to keep myself together, while some of the other newcomers remained on the verge of fainting.

Anyhow, things seemed to have settled considerably. "...I see that you've calmed yourselves. Please continue."

The two of them continued to writhe in agony for a moment before getting up on their feet with Sento-senpai's help. Both of them were panting really hard, which was strange for Moffle because the suit should have concealed his own breathing inside.

"Pants What the hell, you asked me to leave the training to you, and so I trusted you...but what is this? Some Navy SEAL hell week!?"

"Pants It's a disciplinary lesson, *fumo*..." Moffle responded.

"Didn't you see Twitter? There's been a trend of part-timers fooling around by cooling themselves in fridges and sleeping on top of goods. It's a safety hazard, *fumo*. And so we ought to drill some discipline into them the hard way!"

"They'll quit before they even learn the rules! We should be respecting the fact that they even bothered to apply for a job at this shitty park!"

Right then, Macaron and Tiramie added.

"I guess part of the reason was that we watched 'Full Metal Jacket' the day before, *ron*."

"We practiced Hartman's aggressive and vulgar training techniques, *mi*."

“Why am I not surprised... At any rate, you’re relieved from your duties here, so get back to your posts. Come on, shoo!”

Seiya-senpai chased them out like how people would to wild cats.

“Wait, you’re kicking us out, *fumo?*”

“Aww, but I even prepared some cadences to sing for today’s run, *ron!*”

“Yeah, *mi!!* Like ‘Isuzu-chan’s pnsy is mighty cold’...UGH!” [1]

Sento-senpai fired at Tiramie, killing him. I guess her musket also contained spiked rounds.

Moffle and Macaron stared at Tiramie’s corpse on the floor in horror, and slowly backed out of the room. Kanie-senpai and Sento-senpai cleared their throats and addressed us.

“Ahem, my apologies for the...ruckus that they’ve caused. Now that they’re gone, we can start this in proper...wait, don’t go...! Damn, they left...”

After seeing 2 or 3 people escape, Seiya-senpai clicked his tongue in disappointment.

“Sento, if you would, please.” “Leave it to me.”

Part 3

After bringing out some documents, Sento-senpai walked up and spoke.

“Allow me to explain the basic responsibilities of all cast members. Here are the printouts; please pass them around.”

The briefing proceeded smoothly after that. Kanie-senpai had other matters to attend to, so he left immediately.

Sento-senpai proceeded to walk us through some administrative matters, such as the rules that cast members must abide by, uniform sizing, and greetings. The concept of admin got me all excited! All hail admin!

Through her explanation, I came to understand that she and Kanie-senpai were not merely personnel in charge of the part-timers, but leaders in the upper levels of the the hierarchy — though exactly how high was something I wasn't sure about. Sento-senpai's uniform and professionalism in this room made her seem way cooler than she did in school. I'll be as attractive as her one day!

That aside, I'd like to know her relationship with Kanie-senpai. Those two always have a strange mood going on between them. Perhaps they get all lovey-dovey when they're alone together?

Like maybe...holding hands or something!?

Then again, Sento-senpai was unforgiving and even shot people with her musket, so maybe not...

Hmm, I can't leave this alone. I ought to observe them when I

get the chance!

The orientation ended before noon, and we were assigned to the various departments after lunch. Eiko-san was posted to “Macaron’s Music Theater.” I waved my hands as she left us and made her way to the location. She was a nice person. Please let me call you my sister. Never mind, that’s a bad idea.

“Shiina-san.”

“Y-Yes!”

“You’re assigned to ‘Moffle’s Sweet House’ as an assistant actor. Good luck.”

“I-I’ll do my best!”

I’m sure she understood what I meant.

But wait a minute...did she just say “Moffle’s Sweet House”? Wasn’t that where Moffle, the hardcore trainer, worked? And me as his assistant!? I almost wet myself at the thought.

“Are there any issues?” “Erm... no...”

I contemplated escape. I still had time; all I needed to do was apologize to Sento-senpai and quit, return home, and hide under my blanket. That way, I’d spare myself the torture from Moffle.

But no, I will not back out!

After all, I had been a fan of Moffle ever since I was a kid. I greatly adored his cute figure, his big round eyes, and his love

for sweets. I remember how he would tilt his head and go “*Fumo? Mofu!*” which made me want to hug him every time. And whenever I was feeling down, my Moffle plushie would be there to give me support.

This Moffle, however, was violent and vulgar, and looked at us with evil eyes. (Don’t ask me how I could tell what his eyes looked like from inside his suit; I don’t know either!)

This actor had completely ruined my impression of Moffle, turning the meeting room into something like a battlefield for the Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War. Utterly disgusting.

But doesn’t this mean I should be fighting, too? At the very least, I could visit his sweet house and confront him. If I could, I’d force him to take off his suit and reveal his true self, and then teach him a lesson. That way, I can hug my Moffle plushie at home in peace. I’d definitely have a good dream then!

So it’s decided. I’ll raid Moffle’s Sweet House and confront the suit actor, for the sake of a peaceful night’s rest!

*

“Hey newbie, you’re 30 minutes late. Are you testing my patience, *fumo?*”

“U-Ugh... E-Erm...I-I’m shorry...I’m sorry...!”

I nearly cried, despite mentally preparing myself for the face-off! It was my first time backstage, so I got lost and ended up at a completely different place. I was scolded by a robot-like cast member in some space-themed area before getting directions to

the sweet house. I finally got there after scrambling around the area. My sense of direction was appalling.

“I-I got lost... Shorry...S-Sor...”

“Tch whatever, just follow me, *fumo*.”

Saying that, Moffle began to walk off. There was no way I could bring myself to confront him after being so late...how disgraceful of me...

“The preparations for golden week are already so tiring...and now I have to babysit a newcomer? A kid, in fact. Why’d he assign the kid to me anyway, *fumo*...”

Isn't taking care of the kids your job!? I suppressed my desire to exclaim my thoughts.

We walked to the back of the sweet house, through the staff entrance, and into the main area, where the sounds of mice could be heard. In a way, it was an honor to be able to enter the area that was for “Authorized Personnel Only”.

The hallway had equipment scattered around, such as puppets, audio equipment, maintenance tools, and machinery. The stench of thinner suggested that the wall was only just airbrushed, though the thing that intrigued me most was the oversized mask. It was big enough to fit a mascot suit’s face.

“There really should be a department dedicated to general maintenance and park improvements, but the job’s been delegated to the respective attraction’s staff because of the shortage of funds, *fumo*. This is my work space. Don’t touch

anything without permission.” “O-
Okay...”

“First, your uniform, *fumo*. I’m not sure if there are any costumes that fit your size, though...”

Moffle began searching the lockers in the corner of the room, and found a hot pink chef’s costume. It had a simple, yet adorable design.

“This is the smallest I could find, *fumo*. Hmm, stand over here.” “O-
Okay...”

Moffle aligned the costume to my shoulders and arms. Then, grabbed a tape measure and measured my size, even my waist length!

“T-That’s...s-sexual harassment...”

“Huh? What’re you talking about? I have no interest in kids like you. Come on, raise your arms higher. Higher!”

Moffle’s expression was more of disgust than shock. How disgraceful of me.

“Ugh...”

“I guess it really is too large for you, *fumo*. And this pair of pants is out of the question... Hmm...”

Moffle thought for a while, before placing the pants to the side and working on the top. Moffle got a safety pin and, without using so much as a pair of scissors, began sewing dexterously. I never knew he could make such precise stitches with such

round paws. What kind of style was he using?

“This should do. It’s just a rough baste, but try it out, *fumo*.” “Eh? O-O-Over here...?”

“There’s a staff toilet over there; make it quick, *fumo*.”

Moffle rushed me, seemingly irritated. I hurried to the toilet and changed. Just like he said, I was small, so the top half of the costume alone became a one piece dress that went down to about 10cm above my knees. The length was a little embarrassing, but the dress was really cute! All that was left was to put on the chef’s hat.

Amazing! I’m now an official cast member!

I had my doubts about this dress, but I wearing it made me all hyped up. I spun around and looked into the mirror. This looks great! I ought to snap a picture and send it to Mom! She’ll be so happy!

I took out my smartphone and began fumbling through the confusing menu. Just then, there was a loud slam on the door.

“How long are you going to take? Don’t waste my time, *fumo*!”

“Fuwaa! S-Sorry!”

Guess I have to save the photo for next time. I quickly opened the door and walked out.

Moffle inspected my costume, making sure not to cross his limits.

“Okay, good. Looks properly done, *fumo*. Once you finish work, be sure to return it to my work place; I’ll stitch it up properly afterwards. You can place your clothes and belongings in the lockers on the other side. Just pick any one that’s empty, *fumo*.”

“O-Okay.”

I placed my clothes and personal belongings inside a locker.

As expected, Moffle was really strict, but I never thought he’d bother to tailor the costume for me. Perhaps he’s a nice person after all.

“What’s with that gaze? You aren’t thinking that I’m a ‘nice person after all,’ are you?”

“Huh? E-Erm...well...”

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m only altering my precious costume because you’d ruin it if I don’t. Tch...this is such a pain...”

I take that back; he’s a bad person. I must admit that he has good intuition though...

“...I guess you can start by helping at the entrance square today. Follow me.”

*

Moffle and I walked through the underground tunnel and arrived at the backstage of the entrance square. Oh wait, sorry. From today, I will be addressing Moffle as “Moffle-san.” That’s

because I'd feel strange associating Moffle (without the honorifics) with my Moffle plushie. If I added the honorifics, I'd treat him as another person and be able to sleep in peace at night. So...Moffle-san it is.

Anyway, it seems like they call the main plaza, the central area that guests first enter when they visit the park, the "Entrance Square".

"If we continue further, we'll be going 'onstage,' *fumo*. We'll be facing the guests, so be careful about what you say and do."

"R-Roger."

"I'll be performing in front of the guests, so you'll be my assistant. You're in charge of keeping track of the time. We get a rest after 30 minutes, so when the time's up, help me get backstage. Also, take care of the equipment while I juggle, and take photos for guests who want commemorative shots. There might be guests who refuse to let go of me; help me pull them away to make room for others. There are a lot of other impromptu duties that might be entrusted to you onstage too. Do you have any questions?"

I don't even know what I don't know...

I guess that was bound to happen, given that Moffle-san just info-dumped everything in one go. Nonetheless, he was looking at me seriously. I'd be in deep trouble should I say the wrong thing.

"I-I think...I'm okay..."

“Okay. Then let’s go, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san took a breath and walked out. I followed behind and observed, nervous to the point of shivering.

So that’s how people walk the nanba style, huh? I’ll take note of it.

As I stepped onstage for my very first time, I was utterly taken aback. There was a stark contrast compared to earlier in the morning, when the plaza was virtually empty.

“Woah...”

A cheerful melody was playing in the background, complementing the bright colors of the attractions brought in by the warm sunlight.

Macaron, Tiramie, and other mascots like Wanipi, were already there, greeting and entertaining the guests. The mascots were each having their own performances, like playing the flute and pantomiming. Their acts were spectacular; these actors were able to perform despite the bulky mascot suits they were wearing.

Amagi Brilliant Park had a reputation in south Tokyo for being a terrible theme park, but that was obviously not the case.

This was, without doubt, a beautiful land of dreams.

“Up until last month, this place was shit, *fumo*.” Moffle-san whispered. “But everyone did their best; we endured sleep deprivation and resource shortages. Well, I guess you could say these are the fruits of our efforts, *fumo*.”

Ever since the horrible incident this morning, I believed that I made a bad decision in applying here. But now, as I drank in this landscape—of our guests having so much fun; of the cast members enjoying their work—I felt that perhaps...I could stay for a little longer and see this through.

“Let’s begin the most fun job you’ll ever get, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san walked forward. I watched as the rays of the sun cast a silhouette on him, and I was overwhelmed by an indescribable feeling.

I felt like...I’ve seen something like this before. Yes, that’s just like...Dad...

My Dad was a fireman. Whenever he had an emergency call, he’d rush out of the house in a hurry. Seeing Moffle-san’s silhouette must’ve reminded me of Dad’s.

But why? They are two completely different people, with different jobs and appearances, so why am I feeling like this...?

Part 4

“Look, Yuuna-chan! It’s Moffle!”

A family brought their daughter to Moffle-san, who waved at her with his paws. The girl hesitated for a bit before mustering the courage to approach him, holding the hem of her skirt tightly. The girl eventually laughed when Moffle-san patted her head, brightening even her parents’ expressions.

It looked like the current Moffle-san on stage wasn’t the evil bully, but the Moffle whom I hug every night in bed. He must have used magic.

Of course, I couldn’t afford to just stand around and do nothing. I’d been failing at my job as an assistant, after all.

I was staring blankly when the family wanted a photo with Moffle and, before I knew it, they had already moved on to take pictures with other mascots.

Moffle-san glared daggers at me. How scary...

After playing around with the guests, Moffle-san stretched his paw over to me, presumably asking me to hand over the juggling balls. However, I did not realize what he meant at the time, so I just clapped it with my right hand.

Again, Moffle-san glared daggers at me. How scary...

Shortly after, an elderly guest came and asked for directions to an attraction called “Aquario.” Not knowing where that was, I looked around in panic. In the end, the guest took out a

pamphlet and, after using the map printed on it, walked elsewhere.

Once again, Moffle-san's glares were sharp enough to stab me several times. Really scary...

Before I knew it, an hour had passed. I can't help but feel like I forgot something important though... Oh right! Moffle-san instructed me to take him backstage for a break every 30 minutes!

Moffle-san walked off the stage by himself, probably too tired to even wait for my cue. I walked silently behind him.

"You useless fool!!"

Moffle-san shouted at me the moment we returned backstage. "You're supposed to be my assistant, yet you've done nothing, *fumo!* I'm guessing you don't even want to do this job, huh? You think you'll still get your wages!?" "I-I'm sorry..."

"Not this again! Since the start of the day, you've been saying nothing but 'erm' and 'sorry,' *fumo*. Do you even know any Japanese? Or are you actually Ukrainian? At any rate, I might as well do everything myself, *fumo!*"

"S-Sorr—"

"Don't apologize to me anymore!" "F-Fueeeeee..."

Not knowing what to say, tears began to well up in my eyes.

Despite knowing that it wasn't good to cry in the workplace, I couldn't help it. I'm a girl, after all.

I've had countless experiences similar to this. I, being the klutz I am, always end up betraying someone's expectations. They'd get really angry and frustrated and, after saying some comforting words, they'd turn away and distance themselves from me. Moffle-san would probably be the same.

After all, I'm good for nothing. "F-
Fuee...Sorr...Erm..."

Seeing that I'd been reduced to a sobbing mess, Moffle-san sighed. An awkward silence ensued.

Most likely, the next few things he'd say would be 'Whatever. You can go now,' since that would be the easiest way to dismiss me. I wished he'd say that quickly, so I can just go home and bury myself under my blanket, returning to my usual useless self.

However, Moffle-san said this instead:

"You'd better step up your game the next time, *fumo*. Is there anything you want to clarify?"

*

Moffle-san did not allow me to escape. He dragged me back onstage and made me interact with the guests again.

Of course, there was no way I could improve in such a short timespan. My performance was terrible as ever.

The guests sighed, clicked their tongues in displeasure, and even shouted at me. Every time that happened I'd panic and Moffle-san, along with the other cast members, would cover for me. How they helped was a mystery though, because I was too traumatized to tell.

Throughout this ordeal, I'd break down and begin to tear up. Moffle-san would take me backstage and asked if there were things I didn't understand. At first, I wasn't able to ask him anything. But after returning for the 3rd and 4th time, I mustered the courage to ask.

"Erm...what do I say when the guests want to take a picture?"

In response, Moffle-san did not flare up nor scream, but answered calmly.

"Mofu. Say something like 'Hello there, would you like to take a picture with Moffle?' Try saying that to me."

"O-Okay...erm..."

I took a deep breath.

"H-Hello there, would you like to take a picture with Moffle-san?"

"Not 'Moffle-san,' but 'Moffle.' One more time."

"H-Hello there, would you like to take a picture with M-Moffle?"

"Don't stutter, *fumo*. Once more."

"Hello there, would you like to take a picture with...Moffle?"

Moffle-san looked at me intently, and nodded.

“I guess that’s fine. You got it?” “Y-
Yes.”

“Anything else you want to ask?”

*

I survived my first day.

I was brought back to Moffle’s Sweet House, completely exhausted. After cleaning the area, I changed back into my own clothes in the staff toilet. I was already crumbling mentally, but I still had to return the costume to Moffle-san. I really didn’t want to hand over something that was drenched in my own sweat, but I couldn’t bring myself to say it.

I folded the costume and walked towards the work space, but stopped when I overheard a conversation around the corner. It was Moffle-san talking to Kanie-senpai.

“So, how was she?”

“Terrible, *fumo*. She couldn’t even accede to our guests’ requests, and always ended up crying. Seriously... I should be the one in tears, *fumo*.”

They were talking about my performance just now. I stood still and controlled the shivering of my hands and feet.

“So she can’t handle frontline work, huh? If that’s the case, we can always give her a backstage role.”

“I’m not sure about that, *fumo*.”

“What do you mean?”

“Mofu. Seiya, you used to be an actor, right?” “...What about it?”

I could hear Kanie-senpai’s tone becoming stiff.

“When you first started, how was it, *fumo*? You felt nervous, didn’t you?”

“W-Well yeah.”

“I know that you’ve got a lot of guts, *fumo*. And even then, you felt nervous during your first time. I think you can imagine what that timid girl went through just now, *fumo*.”

“Hmph.”

“Be it 3 guests or 300 guests, everyone gets the nerves on their first time, *fumo*. It really is scary, after all. So I won’t judge her ability based on her first time, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san gave an evasive answer. I could tell that Kanie-senpai felt that too.

“What’s up with that? Trying to cover your part-timer’s ass?” “What makes you think—”

“Definitely sounds like it.”

“Mofu... Anyway, I was especially strict to her today. If she runs away, I guess that’s all there is to her. No point treating someone who’d run away nicely anyway.”

“You’re right. But don’t take it too far; this isn’t Sparta.” “Roger, *fumo*.”

I could hear Kanie-senpai's footsteps drowning into the distance, suggesting their conversation ended there. I stood stiff and rooted to the ground after eavesdropping in confusion. Who would've thought the two of them would be able to carry out a conversation like this when they'd been fighting and hurling insults at each other this morning? Could they be good friends after all?

And come to think of it, I never knew Kanie-senpai was an ex-actor! What's up with that? He certainly didn't look like one, considering how Sento-senpai was probably his only friend at school.

"Hey newbie, you heard our conversation, didn't you?"
"...!?"

Moffle-san raised his voice. It seemed like he knew I was eavesdropping all along. Unable to think of an excuse in time, I obediently showed myself and apologized.

"E-Erm, I'm sorry...I just—" "Sigh...
whatever, *fumo*."

Moffle-san waved his paws, seemingly uninterested in probing further.

"I was gonna talk to you about it anyway, so this saves me the trouble of explaining, *fumo*."

Moffle-san grabbed the uniform from my hand and walked to his work space. Not knowing what to do, I followed.

“...I’m aware that today’s been a crazy day for you, *fumo*. Seiya mentioned to me that you’re a first year at high school, aren’t you? Perhaps you were thinking you could have fun juggling a part-time job despite not being accustomed to your new school life?”

“Eh...”

Another bullseye. Were the people in Amaburi all able to read the minds of others?

“H-How did you know?”

“I could tell just by observing you today, *fumo*. I guess you could say it’s a grownup’s thing.”

Moffle-san’s speech was rather mature, but it was hard to take it seriously when it came from a cute little mascot.

“...Anyway, just like I told Seiya, I was being exceptionally strict today, *fumo*.”

“D-Doesn’t that mean—”

“Of course, I’m gonna be even stricter tomorrow. Same goes for the day after, and the day after that. Don’t treat the entertainment industry lightly, *fumo*.”

“Ugh...”

“If you think you can’t take it, leave now, *fumo*. That will save some time for the both of us.”

“...”

“Understood? If so, you’re dismissed for the day, *fumo*.”

Part 5

I could barely even drag myself to work the next day. My stomach hurt a little, and I didn't have any appetite. I figured I should at least drink some milk or something, so I opened the refrigerator and snuck a peek. There was some leftover apple pie from last night, made by Mom to celebrate my first ever part-time job. I wouldn't say it was the best pastry I've ever had, but the sweetness was just right for me—something that wasn't easy to find. The apple pie was definitely a special one, considering how Mom had offered it to Dad's altar and had it blessed with his love.

It was morning. Mom had already left to work at her family restaurant, so I was the only one at home. That meant I had the option of seeking refuge under my blanket and pretending to have forgotten about work.

But...I can't do that!

Tears flowed from my eyelids as I savored the sweet-and-sour taste of the apple pie.

Just one more day.

I considered showing up for work one more time to see how it goes. If I could just do that, perhaps the apple pie would forgive me.

*

"You're late, fumo! Hurry up and get ready!"

Moffle-san shouted at me. All that despite my efforts to suppress my nausea in the bus on the way to work!

At any rate, I rushed to my locker. My costume had been sewn nicely and hung on a hanger. Wearing the costume gave me a refreshing look!

Right after changing, Moffle-san delivered a stream of instructions, making me run here and there to complete the tasks without even giving a breather for me to complain.

There were a few other cast members in Moffle's Sweet House. The cast members were really chill and relaxed, yet did not receive any scolding from Moffle-san; they just minded their business, even ignoring some of Moffle-san's instructions altogether.

"Pretty hectic, don't you think?"

It was right before the park's opening when one of my fellow part-timers spoke.

"That old man has been really pumped ever since we averted last month's crisis. He used to be a slacker back then."

As we spoke, I learned that this part-timer had been working here at Moffle's Sweet House for about a year. He also mentioned that he was a university student, so it wasn't surprising that he was going to quit this job and find a better one soon.

However, it didn't seem like Moffle-san treated them harshly. So why was I receiving such treatment...?

“I’d say it’s because you’ve been making mistakes the whole day yesterday.”

That was something I couldn’t deny. I let out a sigh in displeasure.

Shortly after, it was time to open the park, allowing the guests in. Muffle-san and I stood at the end of the route, waiting to take pictures with the guests who have finished with the attractions. I somehow managed to complete the job — which was the exact same as yesterday’s — scot-free.

The problem came about an hour later, right after we finished dealing with a group of elderly guests.

“All right, time’s up. I’ve got an important meeting to attend, so cover me, *fumo*.” Muffle-san said.

“What?”

“Come over here, *fumo*.”

I followed Muffle-san backstage, entering a room filled with props and costumes. There was a set of Muffle-san’s costume lying around, consisting of a furry inner costume; a patissier’s attire; a large, round headpiece; and a chef’s hat.

“Erm, isn’t this...”

“A spare set, *fumo*. Muffle needs to make an appearance at his Sweet House, so put this on and take pictures with the guests there.”

“O-Okay. B-But...”

What did he meant by that? I guess a theme park was bound to have spare costumes, and although I must admit this costume was rather well-made, it pales in comparison to the one Moffle-san was currently wearing. This one didn't give off the "Moffle-vibe."

I was apprehensive about putting on a costume worn by an absolute stranger, but I figured it'd be better to use one with better quality. I mustered the courage and insisted, "E-Erm, may I use your costume instead...?"

Hearing that, Moffle-san frowned (his costume must've been really well-made, considering how realistic that expression was!) and turned around, only to realize there was nothing but a wall behind.

"*Fumo?*"

He pointed at himself and gave a "Huh? Me?" expression. "Y-Yes... If possible, I'd like to use your costume instead..." "Ah, *mofu...*"

Moffle-san nodded, realizing what I meant. "I can't take this off, *fumo.*"

"?"

"Like I said, I can't take this *costume* off. There's nobody inside, after all."

I didn't get what he was trying to say. I've certainly heard about how theme park staff members would give such statements to

young kids, but then again...

“You don’t get it, do you? Sigh...this is such a pain...”

Saying that, Moffle-san opened his mouth and bit my hand. The sensation was completely different from what I’d expected— sharp and moist, instead of soft and cloth-like. Those were certainly his teeth and tongue...!

“Hiiiiii...!?”

It wasn’t *that* painful per se, but it reminded me of the bites I’d gotten from the hamster I kept when I was young.

“Eh? L-Let go of me...!!”

I retracted my hand and backed off to the very corner of the room. Moffle-san did not pursue me further. He snorted, folded

his arms, and spat saliva with an omega shaped (ω) expression, as if he’d eaten something unpleasant. “You get it now, *fumo*? That’s what I am.” “T-That’s... sexual harassment...”

“Shut up. That’s the easiest way for me to explain, *fumo*. Anyway, I’m a magical creature from the magical realm called ‘Maple Land’. I wasn’t particularly trying to hide this or anything, in case you were wondering. Now that you understand, hurry up and get changed, *fumo*. You have a task to fulfill.”

Saying that, Moffle-san handed me the costume’s head.

*

My hectic day came to an end before I even knew it.

Nonetheless, I couldn't get the events that happened earlier out of my head. If Moffle-san were a fairy from a magical realm, wouldn't that mean he was the real "Moffle"? This is bad...

There's no way the gentle and adorable Moffle I sleep with every night could be that heinous, arrogant, and uncaring Moffle-san!

Furthermore, Moffle-san even said this when he was given donuts for the evening's refreshments:

"Donuts again, huh... I'm not a fan of sweet things, *fumo*."

"H-Huh? But you're the fairy of sweets, aren't you? Shouldn't donuts be your thing?"

"That's just a public profile, *fumo*. We collaborated with Señor Donuts once. You know, the donuts chain that's really popular..."

"Yes. I really like their donuts too."

"I mentioned to them that I liked their donuts during the campaign, *fumo*. Ever since then, I've been given nothing but donuts during my breaks. Like seriously, are they American policemen or something?"

"E-Erm, if that's the case, what kind of sweets do you like?" "Hmm, I'd say salami and dried cuttlefish."

Weren't those appetizers, not sweets?

"Ah, talking about food gives me the alcohol craves, *fumo*. I'm sick and tired of Hoppy. Maybe just for today...some beer..."

“Y-You drink alcohol?”

“Of course. You can say I live to drink, *fumo*.”

Moffle pulled out a cigarette and lit it up with a cheap lighter. Those were Hope brand cigarettes and were really strong. “Hope” was short for Short Hope, often known as Shoppo in Japan.

But wouldn’t this make him just an ordinary old geezer? “What’s up with that face, *fumo*? You think I’m an old geezer?” “Giku—!?”

“Bingo, huh? I never knew there were people who vocalized the ‘giku—’ sound effect, *fumo*.”

“B-But aren’t you a fairy!? Shouldn’t you be a role model to the children, giving them hopes and dreams? Isn’t smoking and drinking a little...”

Moffle-san glared at me. He’s really scary at times like this. “A little?”

“N-Nevermind, sorry.”

Moffle-san, who was sitting beside me, exhaled a breath of smoke with a bitter expression.

“I refrain from such during work, *fumo*. You might want to save your *valuable opinions* till you’re able to do your job properly. By the way...”

Moffle-san turned around and observed me.

“Y-Yes?”

“You’ve gotten a lot more talkative, haven’t you?” “Ah...”

Now that I think of it, Muffle-san was right. I was able to carry out a normal conversation with him today. Strange, it’s hard to imagine that just yesterday I was struggling to even vary my responses.

“Looks like I haven’t been tough enough on you, *fumo*. Guess I’ll *bump up the difficulty* for the rest of the day, *fumo*.”

Part 6

In the end, I had to endure more shouting and scolding from Moffle-san before my second day at work concluded.

Tomorrow would be Monday, so I'd have to go to work again after school. However, I had no intention of turning up—two days' worth of part-time work experience was enough. You did your best, Shiina!

Mom asked me "How was work?" the very moment I got home, but I managed to avoid the question by saying that I was tired; I simply wasn't in the mood to talk about my intention to quit.

And no, I wasn't joking. I was really going to call it quits.

Still, that did not stop me from noticing some strange changes the next day...

* "Oh...good morning, Shiina-san."

The aforementioned girl with a leader's personality called out to me at the shoe lockers. It wasn't surprising that she was unanimously voted into the class committee a few days back. At any rate, I assumed this was just another obligatory greeting done to prevent things from getting awkward after bumping to each other.

"Oh hey, good morning."

For some reason, the girl became dumbfounded at my half-assed response.

Something strange also happened during second period in PE. To begin with, our PE teacher was, to put it nicely, very open. To put it... not very nicely, he was blunt. He would pick on students who lacked enthusiasm and scold them, shouting things like “not loud enough!” He’d derive satisfaction from the exhaustion of these students, which would give him more energy to scold them.

As you might have guessed, I was a popular target. In fact, I’d only just gotten picked on last week.

“Looks like everyone’s here. Okay! We’ll be doing timed sprints today...oh crap, I forgot to bring my stopwatch. Hey you, the small one!”

The teacher pointed at me.

“Yes?”

“Mind fetching my stopwatch from the staffroom?”

“Okay. Where are they kept at?”

“Huh? Oh uh, just ask any teacher there.” “Understood.”

I was pretty sure I’d given a very normal answer, but when I turned to leave the gymnasium, I realized the surrounding students were shooting dubious looks at me. Did I say something I shouldn’t have?

And those weren’t the only weird incidents. There were many other strange things that happened throughout the day, most

of them ending with a person's stunned face after I responded to their questions.

*

"Of course they'd be surprised; you rarely even answer in the first place."

Sento Isuzu-senpai explained to me during our lunch break. I'd intended to have my meals alone as usual, but she came over to my class and invited me. I ended up joining her and having my bento beside a flower bed at the school courtyard.

Isuzu-senpai asked how I was feeling, and so I elaborated on the strange occurrences I noticed throughout the day. Her reply was as previously mentioned.

By the way, I heard that Kanie-senpai skipped school today because he was busy running about raising funds for the park. (Though I'm not very sure why a mere part-time supervisor would need to do that.)

"Eh...?"

I responded to Isuzu-senpai's explanation in confusion.

"You used to shrivel up every time someone spoke to you, saying nothing but 'erm' and 'sorry.' However, you actually answered with a 'Sure, let's go' earlier. Even I was surprised."

"..."

Come to think of it, she was right. Of course, Isuzu-senpai rarely showed any expression on her face, so I wasn't able to tell that

she was shocked. Oh, by the way, I'm no longer addressing her as "Sento-senpai" because she let me use her given name.

Besides, "Isuzu-senpai" sounds cuter.

"Moffle can get very strict at times, so I was concerned about whether you were harboring any intention to quit due to the pressure."

"Is that so? Well...sorry for making you worry..." "See? You wouldn't have said so much a week back." "Ah..."

Now, even *I* was shocked. But what exactly caused this?

"M-Moffle-san told me that the cast members in Amaburi were real fairies from the realm of magic."

Hearing that, Isuzu-senpai frowned slightly.

"Looks like you already know about this, huh? Then again, this information isn't top-secret or anything of the sort."

"Speaking of which, could it be that Moffle-san cast a spell on me?"

"I highly doubt it. Lord Moffle's combat skill is absurd, but he does not possess such a magical power."

"C-Combat skill...?"

Also, did she just address him as "Lord Moffle"? Seriously, a lord?

"Don't worry about it. At any rate, he can't cast spells."

“Then how am I able to speak so...normally?”

“Who knows...”

Isuzu-san shrugged, then ate her tamago-yaki while still in deep thought. The sight of that adorable motion would captivate anybody.

“Perhaps Moffle’s *shock treatment* could have played a part in this?”

“Ugh...”

I hate to admit it, but this might actually be true... After getting beaten by him and embarrassed in front of our guests, conversing with students was nothing. I used to get dumbstruck when my PE teacher yelled at me, but comparing him to Moffle-san was like comparing takoyaki to a blue-ringed octopus. I apologize for that weird analogy, but it’s true.

Nonetheless, this was certainly a complicated situation I’d gotten myself in. On one hand, being able to properly talk with people was great. I’d be eternally grateful if I was able to retain this ability.

On the other hand, I didn’t want to acknowledge the fact that this was all thanks to Moffle-san. I simply couldn’t imagine myself apologizing to him and saying “I’ll continue to do my best at Amaburi!” I mean, wouldn’t that imply that I was someone who believed in cults and superstition? I may be small, but I am by no means a little girl!

“You seem unhappy about this.”

Isuzu-senpai commented as she observed me from the side. “Huh? E- Erm...sorry...”

“Your bad habit’s back.”

Isuzu-senpai snorted (in amusement, or in disgust? I don’t know...), and deftly tossed the last side dish of her bento into her mouth. That piece of chicken karaage looked incredibly appetizing.

“At any rate, do you wish to continue working at the park?” “Erm... Well...”

This was certainly troubling. I’d originally intended to inform her of my resignation via email or something, so I hadn’t mentally prepared myself to tell her this in person.

“Erm...sorry...sorry...”

And just like that, I reverted to my original self. Furthermore, the frustration was causing my voice to get softer, causing the problem to spiral.

“Erm...rest...today...”

I wasn’t able to tell her that I’d like to quit; this was the most I could manage.

“I see. I’ll let them know, then.”

Isuzu-senpai continued with her meal without saying anything further.

*

Whenever I had a horrible day, I would drown myself in a session of karaoke.

First up, a warm-up with vocaloid songs like *Matryoshka*, *Senbonzakura* and *Setsuna Trip*. Singing about 5 or 6 of such songs would prepare my vocal cords sufficiently.

Next, Anisongs! I poured out my emotions with my recent favourite, *Yasashisa no Riyuu* (Hyouka), followed by *Swinging* (The Tower of Druaga) and *Minami Kaze* (Fullmetal Panic!), all of which were awesome songs. Next on the playlist was *The Real Fork Blues* (Cowboy Bebop). It was categorized as “Blues,” but was in fact more of an Enka. Though that didn’t really matter.

After all, the next segment would be solely Enka.

After singing songs like *Kita Sakaba* and *Michinoku Hitori Tabi*, I somehow got into the mood for some western songs.

Shall I do it? I was able to sing the English songs I liked despite the lyrics, not due to silly and immature competitive tendencies, but because I listened to a bunch of Dad’s CDs back then. As such, I’d memorized a lot of English phrases, resulting in surprisingly good English test scores in school.

I started with Nirvana’s songs. The first one up was *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. That song was surprisingly good when one felt down, capable of firing someone up in the midst of the all the darkness.

Speaking of firing up, I continued to sing other similar songs. The next one was by the Godfather of Soul, James Brown.

Because I was feeling down (this has become a frequent line of mine...), I went with *It's a Man's Man's Man's World* that had a soothing feel to it. Shouting "Nothing! Nothing!" while throwing my fist in the air felt great.

And thanks to JB (this was what we called James Brown), I was really fired up now! I moved on to *Living in America*, which was really cheerful and whacky. I never understood why a timid girl like me would enjoy a song like this. Strange, I'd say.

But anyway, all hail America! I just want to speed on an expressway from coast to coast!

We can go anywhere! Atlanta! Chicago! L.A.! Wooooooooooooooooo!
LIVING IN AMERICA!

Right then, I almost choked.
"...!?"

I was singing inside a karaoke room, so it was normal to be surrounded by soundproof walls on all four sides. What wasn't normal, was that there were three creatures peeking through the smoked glass door.

Unsurprisingly, the culprits were Moffle-san, Macaron-san and Tiramie-san. The three of them had their faces pressed against the door, giving strangely serious expressions that were almost indiscernible from frowns.

There was an awkward silence as the lyrics continued rolling on the old brown monitor, and Moffle-san waved his paws signaling me to go on. Of course, there was no way I could do

that as I remained frozen in shock.

Moffle-san and gang sighed and made their way into the room. "I guess we *did* interrupt your session, didn't we? Our bad, *mi*."

"We come to this karaoke bar often, *ron*. Every time we're here, the receptionist tells us that there's an amazing singer in the house, but we never got a chance to see who that person was."

"Who would've known that legendary singer was you, *fumo*."

It sounded like the receptionist (the one who always compliments me) was the one who asked them to eavesdrop on me.

While the doors in each karaoke room were labelled "soundproof," I guess that was all just a lie, since sound could still be heard if one were to stand outside.

Before we knew it, the clock had struck 9.

Amaburi's closing time today was 7. It wasn't strange for the three of them to drop by the karaoke bar beside Amaburi's nearest train station on the way home. (Then again, it's REALLY strange for theme park mascots to come strutting along and singing in a karaoke bar...)

"E-Erm..."

My eyes began to turn watery in panic, and Moffle-san tried to calm me down with a "*mofu*."

"Isuzu told me you're resting, *fumo*. I guess this counts as a 'rest' too, so stop crying."

“Erm, but...”

“That isn’t to say I’m not angry, *fumo*.”

“Hiiiiii!?”

Macaron-san gently patted my shoulders that were stiff in fear.

“Don’t worry, *ron*. This guy’s old fashioned, so he’ll never raise a hand against a woman, *ron*.”

“Macaron...”

Moffle-san muttered in irritation.

“But I guess that’s fine, isn’t it? Consider this favor thanks for your treat, *ron*.”

“My...treat...?”

“Your voice, *mi*. Your singing voice is legendary like the part-timer outside described, and I was completely entranced by it, *mi*! Let’s sing together in Alamo next time!”

“A...Alamo?”

Where’s that? I somehow feel that I’ve seen that name somewhere before, though...

“It’s the love hotel near Amaburi, *fumo*. A little word of advice: Stay away from this perverted dog.”

“T-That’s mean, *mi*! I’m just trying to deepen my bonds with this loli...”

“Shut up, (*fumo/ron*)!” “*mi*...”

Tiramie-san fell silent at their rude remarks.

“...Anyway, you’ve showed us a spectacle, young lady. Never thought we’d find a diamond in a rough! If you’d like, we could change your assignment and let you work under my music theatre, *ron*.”

“O-Okay...”

I gave a standard response, not knowing what Macaron-san meant. “Showed us a spectacle”? “Diamond in the rough”?

What was he saying? I was just singing for personal enjoyment, perhaps he was referring to that?

If that’s the case, I’m honored. But isn’t he exaggerating this? Right then, I had a flashback of a painful experience...

It was back in my 2nd year of middle-school when we had a class excursion. On the way there, the popular girls were singing along to idol songs on the bus and everybody was having fun.

Eventually, it was my turn to sing. I controlled my urge to cry and sang, and for some reason everybody fell silent; nobody said a single word. To this day, I believe it was due to how horribly I sang. The girl who sang before me never spoke to me ever again.

Even now, I haven’t figured how I should interpret their reaction to my singing.

“Okay, whatever, *ron*. Let’s get the ball rolling! What song should I start with...”

Macaron-san picked a remote control and began to fiddle with it.

“While you’re taking your time, I’ll go first, *mi!*” “H-
Hey!”

Tiramie-san went in and grabbed the other remote control. Without caring about manners, he hit the “start” button and a fast-tempo song started playing. It was an opening song to a recent popular anime.

“E-Erm...”

“(Lyrics:) Go-ki-gen-you dou-ka-shi-ta, *mi?* Kao-wo-mi-re-ba, isshun-de-wa-ka-ru, *mi!* Hooligan, Hooligan! We need no principles, *mi!*”

Tiramie-san began making up his own lyrics midway through the song. He’s beyond help...

Just like that, the “soundproof” doors were closed and the 4-man karaoke session began. Macaron-san, who had finished singing, was hitting a tambourine while Moffle-san struggled to decide the next song. Tiramie-san, whose song had just entered the bridge, screamed.

“...Take a strike, and win the match! I’m a fan of the Hanshin Tigers!”

After each of the three had their turn, I was forced to join in.

Macaron-san started with *Ai Senshi* from a Gundam show, upsetting the other mascots. According to their logic, that song

was supposed to be saved for last.

Moffle-san picked some western song that I've never heard of and sang with passion. It was *Body Count* by Ice-T, with its genre being a mix of rap and metal. To put it simply, it was a tune that would make you want to stand up.

"Tell us what to do!?"

"Puff you!"

"TELL US WHAT TO DO!?"

"PUFF YOU!"

I clapped my hands, ignoring my suspicions on those being vulgarities.

More than 2 hours had passed, and Moffle-san and gang got increasingly fired up. Whenever I tried to escape from the place, one of them would grab me and tell me to sing more.

I was getting increasingly desperate. I ended up giving George Michael's *I Want Your Sex* a shot. I tried my best to sing in a tone that matched its sleazy lyrics.

“WOAH!! Don’t suddenly grow up on me brat!” “What a song, *ron!* Your dad ain’t gonna forgive you!”

“This is bad, *mi.* A cute voice doing such lewd lyrics! I’m gonna report this to Agnes-san, *mi!*”

All three of them were fully hyped. This pretty much showed they were just old perverted men. And as we sang more songs, more drinks were downed as well. The three ended up completely drunk.

Everyone sang along to *Galaxy Cyclone Braiger* and *Akuu Daisakusen Srungle*, followed by *Gyakuten! Ippatsuman’s Ah, Sankan-Oh.*

“Aww yeah! Yamamoto Masayuki-sensei’s the best, *ron!* His songs are brilliant!”

“I feel sick, *mi...* Can’t believe I could get drunk from cheap alcohol...”

“Come on, let’s go, *fumo.* This place’s stingy. They’ll charge us more if we stay any longer.”

I was afraid that they’d make this my treat, but thankfully Moffle-san paid for tonight’s fees.

“E-Erm, I guess I’ll be going...”

I said the moment we left the karaoke bar.

“What’re you talkin’ ‘bout, *ron!*? We’re gonna bring you to somewhere much more awesome, *ron!*”

“The night’s still young, *mi!* Ugh...”

Tiramie-san puked behind a nearby electricity pole. Utterly disgusting. Macaron-san grabbed my shoulders, trying to take me somewhere else.

“W-Wait...Moffle-san!”

I turned to Moffle-san for help. Moffle-san was scary, but he was undoubtedly the most mature and good-willed among them.

Surely he could talk some sense into them and let me free? “*Mofu...*
Hick

Moffle-san’s eyes were blank. He held a bottle of sake on his right paw and drank from it.

“M-Moffle-san?” “Just come.” “Eh?”

“I said just come, *fumo*. Come with us!”
“Wait...hey...”

“I said, just come with us, *fumo*. It’ll be an experience for you; there’s no need to be afraid.”

“Iyaaa...!!”

And just like that, I was dragged off into the dark side of town.

Part 7

Two hours later—

“I’m terribly sorry, (*fumo/ron/mi*)!”

Moffle-san and gang were kneeling in a parking lot behind a hostess club, apologizing in tears.

Isuzu-senpai had rushed all the way over here upon receiving my SOS by phone, half-butchered the mascots who had been flirting with the hostesses inside, and brought them out of the bar. She then thrust her musket in their faces and demanded a sincere apology.

The sight of the 3 mascots begging for mercy in a parking lot was a pitiful sight. It definitely wasn’t something you’d want to show to kids. Speaking of which, I didn’t want to look at this either...

“If you three were just bullying her at work, that’d be easy to settle... But what on earth were you guys thinking, bringing her to an adult only place like this!?”

Isuzu-senpai’s voice was full of killing intent. I guess she really was as scary as the mascots...

“B-But we didn’t make her drink any alcohol, *mi*!”

“Yeah! At least we were considerate, *ron*!”

Macaron-san and Tiramie-san were desperately trying to seek understanding for their deeds. To be honest, Macaron-san had actually said “Drink it, *ron*~ You know you want to!” but I’ll keep

silent about it.

“That’s not the point! In the first place, Lord Moffle, why did you even let them do what they wanted? I never thought you’d do such a thing!”

“*Mofu...* My bad, *fumo*. I drank too much...”

Moffle-san’s voice sounded like he received a severe punishment from her as well. It was as if his back teeth (did he even have back teeth?) had literally bit a bullet.

“Hey newbie, I’m sorry for what we did to you tonight, *fumo*. You’d better be going... has the last train departed?”

“What do you think? It’s 1 in the morning.”

“Ah, you’re right, *fumo*. Here’s some money for a taxi, I hope it’s enough, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san brought out a wallet from seemingly nowhere and took out a few 1000-yen notes.

“Eh!? B-But I’ve never ridden a taxi before...”

Seeing me in panic, Isuzu-senpai stepped in and returned the notes.

“She doesn’t live far from here. I’ll walk her home.” “O-Okay. Thanks, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san stood up, supported the wobbly Tiramie-san, and began to leave while struggling to maintain his balance.

“There’s a rehearsal for a performance tomorrow. Do you think you can make it?”

“Y-Yeah, we’ll be fine, *fumo*...”

“*Mi*... I wanna eat some ramen, *mi*. With lots of tonkotsu...” “Give us a break, *ron*. You’ll definitely puke... Ugh...”

The 3 of them walked away. For some reason, I wasn’t angry as I watched them from behind, but felt bad instead.

“It must’ve been scary. I apologize for their actions.” “I- It’s okay...”

I wasn’t able to say anything apart from those words, considering how she came to my rescue after receiving my plea for help. Of course, I won’t deny that this had been a scary and troubling experience, but now that I think of it—

—never mind, forget I said anything.

*

In the end, I decided that I’d continue working at Amaburi for a little longer. There was, however, a little change in my workplace. Isuzu-senpai had reassigned me to Macaron’s Music Theater, while Adachi Eiko-san moved into Moffle’s Sweet House. When asked, “...that’s because the two of you did not seem to be on good terms” was her explanation.

Despite my mental preparation to ask for a cancellation in reassignment, I couldn’t bring myself to do so. Besides, being separated from Moffle-san should make my life a lot easier.

Macaron-san’s working style was a lot more laid-back, making my time at Moffle’s Sweet House look even more like a

nightmare. Hearing that I had stage fright, Macaron-san also did not give me any duties on stage. I was tasked to work behind the scenes, and I was finally able to be of use, for once.

While working backstage, I bumped into Moffle-san several times. He'd ask me how I was doing, and I'd reply with "I'm fine, thank you." He'd then give an emotionless "I see" before leaving. For some reason, I could sense loneliness in his words. Then again, I could just be overthinking things...

By the way, Kanie-senpai did not seem to care much about my existence, even until today. We'd cross paths occasionally at work, and he'd give nothing but a "Hey" before walking off. I guess that couldn't be helped—Kanie-senpai always seemed so busy, to the extent where he even had to play truant from school.

As for the park, we'd been focusing a lot on the renovation of the attractions, recently. The mole-like mascots—called the Diggeries, or so I heard—were incredible; they managed to reconstruct infrastructure in a matter of days. Perhaps this was another one of the many *magic powers* that fairies from Maple Land possessed? (Even then, this was still a really big feat for the park, considering how the renovations costed a bomb, or so I heard...)

And so, while struggling to decide if I should resign or not, I somehow survived a full week at Amaburi.

However, things did not seem to be getting better at school because I reverted to my old self—unable to carry out a proper

conversation, always getting bullied by my PE teacher, et cetera. Then again, it was unrealistic to expect my character to change in such a short period.

To couple with that, the feeling of “freshness” I had as a newcomer in Amaburi was starting to wear off. I began to question why was I even working in the first place. I originally sought a part-time job in an attempt to change myself for the better, but from the looks of it, nothing much had changed—I rarely even got to speak with anyone in school, save the occasional chatting sessions I had with Isuzu-senpai. At work, I’d just be spending my time cleaning, carrying equipment, or checking the inventory in the storage.

During the preparation for Golden Week, work behind the scenes was a lot tougher than onstage. The renovation works and countless rehearsals worked every cast member to the bone. Even after hours, they had to help with the shifting of supplies and sound checks, which often continued past midnight.

I could tell things had gotten very bad when Isuzu-senpai started to skip school as well. Even if I *did* see her in school, she’d be dozing off by herself.

Thankfully, I wasn’t in their department, so I had a rather routine work schedule. It was so bland that I actually felt a greater sense of achievement during my first two days of suffering under Moffle-san’s supervision.

May was coming soon.

I got to work early on the last Saturday of April, thinking I'd finish work once and for all, and tender my resignation. I sent an email to Isuzu-senpai, asking to speak with her personally after work today.

*

It was the first day of Golden Week.

Everyone was busy throughout the morning. To be exact, they'd been busy ever since last night, working nonstop on the renovations and putting up flyers around the park. It looked like there would be a really big show later in the afternoon.

They even said reporters from news stations would be coming down.

Despite the cast members' prolonged suffering, they were told to "assemble in front of Maple Castle before opening hours."

Maple Castle was located opposite of the entrance square. Contrary to what its name suggested, the castle wasn't cute at all, and was more like a rugged fortress designed to fight off a Napolean invasion. A huge crowd had gathered at its entrance. There were a few hundred people, including part-timers like me, suit actors, and actual mascots. The speakers gave a brief howl before quieting down.

"Okay, looks like you're all here. We're short on time, so I'll make this quick!"

The person standing on the huge stage and addressing the entire cast population was none other than Kanie-senpai. He

was wearing a really cool suit that had a gold lanyard hooked to his shoulder. From this distance, I was barely able to make out the words on the band that was pinned to his sleeve. It read “Acting Manager.”

Him? The acting manager, and not just a group supervisor?

“So, today’s the first day of Golden Week; I’m pretty sure you’re all aware of how important this period is to our park! You could say our performance for this week will determine our future for the rest of the year! We’ve been doing our best in the preparation—a lot of our attractions have been renovated and revamped, and we’ve even secured a segment in the newspapers for our advertisements! We’re all set; all we need is for each and every one of you to give your best this week! You hear me!? Each and every one of you!”

There were some apathetic and emotionless cast members among the pack, but most of the people gathered today remained fixated on Kanie-senpai, especially the fairies from the “Realm of Magic.”

“Show me the fruits of your month’s worth of rehearsals and practices! Don’t make any mistakes! Entertain our guests with everything you’ve got! If you’re professionals, this should be nothing to you! Anyone who doesn’t feel like they can take the challenge, leave now! We have no need for wimps in our park!”

Kanie-senpai’s words came out harshly, as if he were a general preparing his men for a war. It was hard to understand why a cool person like him would use such threatening tactics. His

speech even scared me stiff.

“But never forget...that there’s something even more important than everything I just said. You hear me? And that is—”

Just when everyone was eagerly awaiting the continuation, Kanie-senpai paused.

“—And that is to enjoy yourselves.”

Right when he finished his sentence, a mysterious silence enveloped the area. There were mixed reactions among the cast members—some were disappointed, while others nodded in agreement. Regardless, Kanie-senpai’s point was something that each cast member should have already known. People around me began to smile.

“And that’s all. ...Everyone, time’s up. Let us enjoy the week we’ve worked so hard to prepare for! To your positions!”

We all cheered and clapped our hands, and left for our posts while others wolf-whistled. Everyone was hyped up!

“Seriously, that guy knows how to deal with his men, *ron*.”
Macaron-san mumbled to himself as he walked beside me.

“And there I was, getting all nervous for nothing, *ron*. Who would’ve thought Kanie-kun could fire us all up like this?”

“E-Erm, just what is his role in the park...?” “He’s our savior, *ron*.”

On our way back to Macaron’s Music Theater, Macaron-san briefly walked me through the things that happened before I

joined.

It turned out that Amagi Brilliant Park was supposed to have closed by March. However, Kanie-senpai—or Oracle, according to them—was invited to help manage the park. And through some miracle, they were allowed to continue operating here.

“Most of us screw around and cause trouble for him, but we respect the effort he’s put in to save us all, *ron*. That guy’s hiding some kind of power in him, I tell you.”

I honestly couldn’t believe his words. What could a loner in school have done that could save an entire theme park?

And compared to him, I’m just a—

No...comparing the two of us like this wasn’t accurate. Kanie-senpai might be a meanie, but he was certainly talented in ways I could only wish to be.

And thus, through my contemplation, I ended up being the only miserable one among the cast members.

Part 8

Perhaps partially due to the good weather today, our visitor count was climbing at a steady rate.

As usual, I was assigned to work backstage. I originally helped Macaron-san out in the basement of his theater earlier in the morning, but was eventually told to assist the cast members at the main stage.

“E-Erm, the main stage, you say?”

“It’s the one Kanie-san used to make his speech.”

Said the cast member who stopped me earlier. Apparently, she was the fairy of water working at Aquario, called Muse. Her attire was a little too revealing for my tastes, but was really pretty regardless.

“We’re lacking manpower at the main stage. There’s the women’s costumes to prepare, the equipment to carry over, and the wiring to settle. I need to prepare for my performance, so I’ll be going...!”

She seemed to be running around the park and searching for cast members who are free to help. After asking for a favor from me, she ran ahead.

I told one of the Diggeries who was in the music theater that I’d be heading elsewhere. After he responded with a “gotcha,” I sprinted to the main stage.

Ah, I remember now! This was the stage that would be used for

the special show, “A(maburi)-fight begins! The descendent of Earth, Moffle.” That show was the highlight of this Golden Week’s event.

This was written in the pamphlet:

“The beginning of the big renewal! Dark clouds covered the skies of Sorcerers’ Hill.

Oh no! The magical fairies of Amagi Brilliant Park have lost their precious magical energy! Can they recover the hopes and dreams of the children in the park?

Join Moffle, Macaron, Tiramie and the cast members in their journey to right the wrongs!

A song and dance, specially brought to you right here at Amagi Brilliant Park!

(Performance schedule subject to changes in the event of wet weather.)”

...Let’s not imagine how those three drunkards could possibly fight to take back the “hopes and dreams of the children.” This would just be nothing more than a show, anyway.

I arrived at the main stage that was bustling with activity. There, I saw Macaron-san walking out of the changing room. For some reason, he was wearing a checkered miniskirt and a navy-blue jacket. Was he really going to go up cross-dressing as a female high-schooler? The sight of him gave me the creeps...

I’m guessing my expression reflected my thoughts about his appearance, because Macaron-san stood up all of a sudden

when he saw my face.

“What’s with that look, huh!? In case you don’t know, this is a Scottish highland dress, and not a woman’s costume, *ron!*”

Ah, that figures. I observed his appearance in detail, and realized he was also holding on to a bagpipe. I’d completely forgotten the fact that Macaron-san was the fairy of music.

“A-Anyway, what are you doing here, *ron*? Weren’t you in charge of my theater?”

“W-Well, Muse-san told me to help out here...”

“Is that so? Then go find Dornel. He could use some help, *ron.*”

“Dornel...?”

That sounded like the name of a piece of military weaponry, or something that could shoot huge laser beams.

“He’s the director for this show, *ron*. He should still be at the control room. Hurry, we have less than 30 minutes left!”

I did as he said and ran to the control room. There were computer monitors everywhere, and the whirring of computer fans echoed throughout the room. There was a commotion going on among a few of the Diggeries and a weasel-like fairy.

“Have you checked the speakers north of the stage!? Hurry, *mogu!*”

“The fifth elevator’s malfunctioning, *mogu!* Mobilize the technicians!”

“Fire the mega particle accelerators! Aim for the left wing!”

They were all busy with their tasks, shouting instructions that did not have anything to do with music.

“E-Erm, I was told to help you out...”

As I said that, the weasel-like mascot turned around. He was wearing an arm band that read “Director,” so he must be Dornel-san.

“Is that so? Then would you please carry this box to the special changing room? Use a map if you need directions, *neru*.”

As I stood there trying to process the instructions received, someone entered the room from behind me. I looked around to find Kanie-senpai standing there, ignoring my presence and addressing Dornel-san.

“How’s everything going?”

“Oh hey, commander. Not very good, but we should be able to make it, *neru*. Will you be overseeing the operations here?”

“Yeah. Of course, if I’m disrupting your work then I’ll find an empty seat somewhere else.”

“Be my guest, *neru*. You’re also a director, after all. And you there, what are you still waiting here for? Hurry and take the package away!”

Realizing I’d been listening in on their conversation, Dornel-san shouted at me.

“I-I’m sorry!”

I ran over and picked up the huge box and the paper map.

Kanie-senpai, finally noticing my presence, looked at me and gave an “oh?” Making use of the thin paper map, I hurried over to my destination. It appeared that they’d yet to finalize the layout of the park, given that its underground tunnel network was still being renovated.

Come to think of it, what was this “special changing room” Dornel-san spoke of? It certainly gave an impression that it was hidden in some secluded building in this park...

Thankfully, there were thoughtful people who placed signs on the walls of the tunnel. One of them read “Special Changing Room, *mogu* →.” I arrived at my destination a few minutes later.

I opened the door that had the “Special Changing Room” sign pasted on it and walked into a large hall.

And right in the middle of that hall, a large dragon was there. Yes, a real dragon.

It had incredibly large teeth and toenails that looked like they could rip a truck to pieces. There were 4-5 cast members busily walking about, polishing its scales and applying fluorescent substances to it. It was then, I noticed — they were putting on make-up for the dragon.

<Ah yes, that’s the spot. Please be careful with my nape.> The dragon spoke.

<That’s my most attractive part. Many cute babes fell for me thanks to it. Just wait till we meet the guests! I’ll charm them all!>

“Okay, okay, please try not to talk; I can’t apply this if you keep moving.”

A woman who resembled a dark elf with long ears spoke while trying to brush the dragon’s nape. (Looking closely, I realized she wasn’t using make-up, but car polish.)

<You don’t believe me eh, Ashe-san? I used to be really popular, I tell you. Heard of the popular idol dragon named Eliza Gonda? I’m her son—>

“Can’t you just be quiet for once? In the first place, you’re playing the villain today so there’s no need for you to charm anyone! And speaking of which, why is an accountant being assigned a role like this...”

<Oh my, and who could this little darling be?>

The dragon’s words directed everyone’s attention to me. “Is there anything you need?” Ashe-san spoke.

“E-Erm excuse me. The director named Dornel-san or something asked for this to be delivered to you...”

<Oh yes, it’s finally here!>

“Looks like it came on time, huh? I was getting worried since it was a custom-made piece...”

<Thank goodness. Last night’s rehearsal was a mess because I didn’t have this. I wouldn’t be able to match the timings without it!>

The cast members opened the box, and removed an earphone

that was the size of a watermelon. They squeezed it into the dragon's left ear and switched it on.

"Testing, testing. Can you hear me?"

<Loud and clear...WOAH!>

"What's wrong? Is it too soft?"

<N-No! It's too loud! Turn it off!> "Stop struggling! That's dangerous!"

Hearing Ashe-san's shouts through the earphones, the dragon's struggling became even more violent. Following the cast members nearby who were running for their lives, I crept my way out of the room.

"I-I'll be taking my leave; please excuse me!"

I shouted back before turning around and fleeing the scene.

Part 9

Throughout my stay in the park, I'd gotten numb towards most of the strange things that happen here. Nonetheless, that dragon was on a whole new level of absurdity. It looked so real, and they seemed hell-bent on letting it perform on stage.

Honestly, I'm worried.

I arrived back at the control room, where Kanie-senpai was having his conversation with the others.

"I have no regrets. I've been trying to find a good way to utilize Rublem, and this is the perfect opportunity to showcase his magnificence."

"I still think this is quite risky, commander. I doubt we can just go around telling them that Ruby's a 'special effect,' *neru*."

"What're you talking about? We're just going to pass it off as a trade secret. Invite their speculations, let them take pictures and post online wherever they want."

The side of Kanie-senpai's mouth twisted, revealing an evil smile. Even then, his expression was quite stylish. I don't even know how I feel about him anymore...

The monitor beside me appeared to be displaying the footage of a surveillance camera. There was a huge crowd swarming, numbering not in the hundreds, but in the thousands. And more were flooding in.

"I-I delivered the package."

“Oh, you’re back. Let’s have you carry these cables to the 15th store room next, *neru*.”

Dornel-san immediately returned to operating the terminal after saying that, and Kanie-senpai just shot a glance at me, saying nothing but an “oh?” How frustrating.

Once again, I did as Dornel-san instructed and carried the cables to the store room. From the looks of it, it seemed like they were just telling me to clean up the unwanted junk from the room. These cables were so worn out they were virtually unusable. Was there really any need for me to come and help them out in the first place?

There were about 5 minutes left before the performance.

On my way to the 15th store room, I could see performing cast members preparing themselves for the big show. The chaos had subsided, and each of them were maintaining their composure and controlling their nervousness before their moment of glory. Numerous cast members dressed in dazzling outfits could be seen waiting beside the elevator that would go straight up to the stage. Muse-san was there as well, repeatedly adjusting her attire.

Beside an elevator located deeper inside, Macaron-san was staring at a picture and mumbling something to himself. I wonder what that was? A photo of his family? And beside him, Tiramie-san was leaning on a pillar and taking a peaceful nap as if he were Corporal Hicks in his hypersleep back to Earth [1].

Alas, Moffle-san was nowhere to be seen. Of course, he was the

main star of the show, so he should be held somewhere, preparing for his act.

“3 minutes until the performance begins. All departments, please report your status to the control room.”

There was an announcement that played throughout the backstage, voiced by Isuzu-senpai. The various leaders began responding to the announcement with an “all ready.” As the announcement ended and the BGM resumed, I could hear a commotion starting from the distance. It was becoming increasingly noisy, making me nervous as well.

Assuming that everything would have started by the time I finished, I proceeded to bring the cables into the store room before heading back to the control room.

However, things didn't seem right when I returned from the store room.

The cast members were still on standby, looking nervously at their watches. It was already 5 minutes past the show's supposed commencement time.

Once again, the speakers played another announcement. This time, Isuzu-senpai sounded stiff.

“There's a problem with the audio equipment. All stations are to remain on standby until further notice.”

*

The control room was in complete chaos when I returned. The cast members were pale and breaking out in cold sweat as they

operated the controls while communicating with somebody.

Listening in on their conversation from the back, it seemed that the main speakers were faulty, unable to play music, sound effects, and voice input from the microphones. They couldn't begin the performance, given that the speakers couldn't drive the volume loud without generating significant distortion.

"Why is this happening, *neru!*? Wasn't it perfectly fine when we checked yesterday?"

"I have no idea, *pi*. We did everything in a rush, so maybe we messed up something, somewhere..."

"We're going to inspect the wiring thoroughly, *mogu!*" "How long will that take?"

"10 minutes. Wait, no...looks like it'll take 20, *mogu!*"

"What, that's absurd, *neru!* Our guests won't wait that long! They'll be gone before we're done!!"

It looked like the situation was far worse than I'd expected. I didn't even dare to tell them I was back in fear of bothering them during a crucial time like this.

Kanie-senpai was sitting in a corner of the control room with a serious expression, deep in thought. Normally, he'd be shouting at the staff and getting all restless, but he was not. Instead, he just sat there calmly.

I recall seeing this kind of expression before.

I remember bringing some onigiri to Dad's workplace with

Mom during a period of floods. Dad, who had been on standby and unable to return home, sat calmly in front of the transceiver awaiting instructions. His expression back then resembled Kanie-senpai's.

However, when Dad noticed I was there, he returned to his usual gentle and caring self. Kanie-senpai, on the other hand, acted completely differently upon my entrance.

“Oh, you're back.”

He became completely silent after saying just that. I ended up walking to another corner and watched over them despite being unable to do anything to help...

One minute passed after another, yet the cause of the fault had not been found.

I could see our guests becoming increasingly restless. Being forced to wait, they must've been bored and irritated. Parents were struggling to calm their kids down seeing how they were about to cry.

Announcements were repeatedly being played through the speakers, saying that they were “looking into the problem, please wait a moment.” Eventually, guests began leaving the stage.

“How's it going, *fumo*?”

Moffle-san, who was dressed in a white chef's costume and red mufflers, entered the room. He must have come to check the status of the problem. Like Kanie-senpai, Moffle-san didn't

sound agitated. In fact, he seemed rather calm, probably to prevent worsening the mood of Dornel-san's crew.

"It's gonna take a while. They mentioned the problem being the new amplifier."

"Should I go onstage first? I might be able to buy us some time, *fumo*."

I see. So he actually came to offer assistance to them, which made sense seeing how he was never one to leave his position for nothing.

"No can do. We've planned to have you appear after Macaron hypes them up, haven't we? There'd be no point if you came out before then."

"I know, *fumo*. But if nobody entertains them now, we're screwed..."

"Why don't we let Isuzu do the talking? At least the announcement channel is working."

Kanie-senpai tried to crack a joke, but unfortunately his voice sounded too grim.

"Now's not the time for dumb jokes, *fumo*."

"Fine. She doesn't have enough humor in her to amuse the crowd, anyway. Even having a singer perform would be better."

Both of them fell silent. They seemed to be out of options. But after a brief moment, Moffle-san sighed.

"A singer, you say? Wait never mind, *fumo*..."

Moffle-san snuck a gaze towards me. He had noticed my presence from the start, but he was beginning to pay more attention to the very fact that I was there.

“Hey, newbie.”

“Y-Yes?”

“Go grab a mic and sing for the crowd, *fumo*.”

Everyone was stunned. Kanie-senpai, Dornel-san, and obviously myself included.

“S-Sorry...?”

I asked to make sure I didn't mistake his words, but Moffle-san appeared insistent.

“The guests are bored, *fumo*. Go sing a song to make their wait less painful.”

What on earth was he talking about? Me? Singing to a crowd THIS big?

“I didn't tell you to go onstage, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san continued.

“The announcer's room is just next door. Isuzu's there making the announcements; just go there and sing for our guests. Don't worry, they'll like it.”

Thoughts of unease came flowing through my mind.

Don't joke around with me please you're really intending to kill me aren't you of course you are there's no way I'll walk out of that room alive after singing to such a big crowd you're joking

aren't you please tell me that you're joking otherwise I might wet myself right here to think of it I can just escape from this place right now can't I I should have the right to refuse this after all after all this is just too unreasonable there's no way I can please the audience with my singing they'll all just cringe I'm no superstar after all I won't be able to forgive myself if they boo at me my heart isn't prepared enough to handle the criticism why must I be forced into such a situation I'm only getting 850 yen an hour this is too cruel I'm not like you cruel fairies you know are you guys devils or demons or soldiers of darkness at any rate I firmly refuse I am not obliged to do as you say don't go around causing trouble for me this wasn't my fault in the first place so I don't know I don't know I don't know —

“Moffle, what on earth are you talking about?”

Kanie-senpai stood up, walked over, and asked in shock. “Are you really going to make a part-timer sing? This show

determines our park's future, in case you haven't noticed! We

should get someone more qualified if we're really going to have a performance. Even Isuzu's more fit for the job! If things get really bad, hell, even I'd do it. It may not look like it, but I'm a pro... But at any rate, you can't possibly —”

“Even then, you're no match for Chuujou Shiina, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san spoke bluntly. He was the last person I'd expect to address me by my full name. Kanie-senpai seemed offended at it.

“What are you trying to say, huh!?”

“Wait, I don’t mean it that way, *fumo*. It’s just that this girl’s REALLY good at singing. I’ve been singing karaoke for a really long time and know a thing or two about it, but I’m still no match to her, *fumo*. There’s just this emotional power and calmness in her voice that can’t be attained through mere practice. She may be clumsy and have stage fright, but she’s legit, *fumo*.”

“Her? You mean this girl?”

Kanie-senpai’s words came out rather arrogantly, but it was a legitimate concern. Either way, I kept my mouth shut.

“*Mofu*. We heard her sing at a karaoke bar a few nights back. I’m not joking here. But of course, you’re the boss, so I won’t say further.”

Moffle-san became quiet, resulting in an awkward silence. Kanie-senpai stared at me in deep thought, with those scary eyes that make me want to run away and hide. A moment later, he finally spoke.

“We can’t do it.”

“Seiya...!”

“Even if you were being serious about this, I can’t entrust this to someone who’s always running away. One needs to have the courage and strength to perform impromptu, and I sense none of that in her. She’s gonna screw up.”

“Tch...”

“You said you’ve been in this field for some time, didn’t you?”

Then you should be well aware that courage and guts are more important than raw skill. They need the ability to continue singing the next line even if they were pushed to the limits.

She's gonna have to be able to continue singing even if the crowd jeers her. Take a look for yourself, do you see any trace of courage in her? Of course not. That's why we can't let her do it."

"Mofu..."

Moffle-san was unable to contest his claim.

On the other hand, I've never felt this much rage pumping through my veins. I should have run away long ago, but I didn't this time.

This person—although cool, talented, and handsome—was talking like he knew everything about me.

I'm sorry but, has an arrogant person like you ever suffered any hardship? There was no way I could let this slip by without doing anything.

Just what do you know about me?

We've never had a proper conversation, and yet you were able to read everything about me just by staring for a few seconds?

Don't joke with me.

This was certainly unpleasant indeed. But what should I do? How could I prove my worth?

"—I'll sing." I declared.

"What?"

“I’ll sing. I’m not particularly nervous, and I don’t remember you having an eye for a person’s qualities. I’ll sing, if that changes your impression of me. And yes, I’m serious.”

“What did you...”

“We don’t have much time, do we? Go back to your seat; I’ll go even if I have to force my way through.”

I stormed out of the room, eyes blazing furiously.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

[1]: Reference to the character Corporal Dwayne Hicks from the movie, *Aliens*.

Part 10

Looking back at my earlier actions, I realized I hadn't really been my normal self. The nonsense I spewed must've been the result of the built up frustration from a failed high-school life and the disconnect from reality I've experienced since I joined the park.

"Are you really sure of this?"

Isuzu-senpai confirmed with me at the announcer's room, after hearing what happened from Moffle-san who tagged along.

"This girl's serious, I tell you. Right, newbie?" "Yes. I'm dead serious."

I gave a direct reply, though I was pretty sure my expression did not match what I said.

"Please let me do it."

Isuzu-senpai remained quiet and glanced at Moffle-san. After making sure he was serious about this too, she gently nodded.

"Understood. But what about the song? This isn't a karaoke room, so we don't have that many tracks available."

"Any one will do. Let's see...how about *This Brilliant Park*?" "You're really gonna do that?"

That was the song that's always played everywhere in the park. I heard it was composed during the 80s, and the song went like this:

Brilliant, brilliant! Brilliant Park!

We're only going to get much bigger!

Every day at work is fun; I wonder what guests we'll get today in this splendid park!

Ah, splendid Amagi Brilliant Park, everybody's beloved park!

That was the main gist of the lyrics. I really hope they fired their composer.

Also, its melody had a patriotic vibe similar to the Russian anthem. Combining those two together just made it sound more like a tool for propaganda. But whatever; any song will do. All I needed to do was to sing it.

To be honest, I think I just made a reckless decision. I'd sing this song to the already-annoyed guests, causing even more frustration and possibly blowing everything up.

It was just like how I'm thinking that "everyone should just die!!!"

...Of course, I couldn't bring myself to scream it out. "We're going live."

Isuzu-senpai operated the controls. The speakers throughout the park began playing a fanfare tune. That was a pretty long intro song for a mere announcement, I'd say. After that, Isuzu-senpai grabbed the microphone and spoke.

"We apologize for the wait. The special show will begin very shortly, but before that, please listen to our park's theme song, *This Brilliant Park*."

“What a half-assed message, *fumo*...”

“Keep quiet. Shiina-san, your turn.” *Okay*.

I stepped forward and cleared my throat. The announcer’s room was located in the Maple Castle, overseeing the large stage. As such, one could see the guests who had gathered around the stage. They seemed restless and some were even making their leave, but even then the crowd was huge—easily exceeding 1000 people.

Some of the guests were operating huge video cameras. They must be television broadcasters.

Can I really sing in front of this crowd?

I began to tremble at the terrible mistake I just made. My legs were shivering and I was tearing up. All I wanted to do was apologize and leave the room. But just then, Muffle-san said this to me:

“Sing, *fumo*. I’m sure your dad is listening.” My face turned pale.

I had no idea how Muffle-san knew about Dad. But for some reason, my chest heated up, thawing my frozen limbs and melting my fears away. I could feel myself being pushed forward by Dad’s and Muffle-san’s voices, and my feelings were welling up from within.

“...”

I was originally able to control it, but I eventually gave in. I opened my mouth and let these feelings do the talking.

Brilliant, brilliant! Brilliant Park!

Truth be told, this park wasn't "splendid" or "brilliant" at all. Why were these people even bothering to come here? Were they idiots?

I continued to sing.

My lips moved effortlessly, and my voice came out from my vocal cords smoothly. So smooth, in fact, I could tell its texture from its vibrations in my throat.

This sensation was one I've never felt before, way better than any solo karaoke session I've had.

I continued singing.

Isuzu-senpai was speechless. Moffle-san looked at me with a serious expression without moving an inch, and likewise, the guests below fell silent and listened.

I forced my eyelids shut, clenched my fist and extended my breath for as long as I could.

Ah, splendid Amagi Brilliant Park, everybody's beloved park!

Right after I finished, I could hear some light clapping among the crowd. The clapping eventually got louder, though I still couldn't understand what was going on. It was only after a few seconds when the crowd erupted in applause, with some even wolf-whistling at me.

Just what were they cheering at? Wait, normally this would mean—

“This must be a dream, isn’t it?”

Isuzu-senpai muttered.

“*Mofu*. You’ve got me there.” Moffle-san spoke in satisfaction.

“We’d be letting them down if we stop at just one song, *fumo*.”

*

I was told to sing a few more songs after that. I couldn’t remember the duration of my performance, as I was engrossed throughout the performance while the support crew worked on the speakers.

Halfway through the last song, Moffle-san patted my back and made his way down.

“Thank you for your patience. The special show, ‘A(maburi)- fight begins! The descendent of Earth, Moffle’ will now begin.”

Isuzu-senpai spoke through the microphone.

Shortly after, a BGM begin playing through the speakers and pieces of confetti were released. Macaron-san and Tiramie-san, along with the other cast members, entered the stage and began their dance.

Sorcerers’ Hill, a land of dreams.

A place full of flowers, music, and lots of fun!

But wait! Aren't we missing something?

Yes, that's right! Sweets! We're missing sweets!

Everyone, let's cheer once more for Moffle, the fairy of sweets! Moffle! Moffle!

Moffle-san appeared on a tall platform, and an array of colorful fireworks welcomed his arrival. He jumped on the trampoline and did a back-flip before landing on the stage with the dancers circling him. The motion felt strange; and it was hard to believe that this feat could be done by someone wearing such a bulky suit.

Halfway through a song, Moffle-san coughed and walked out of the stage. Someone tossed him a towel for him to freshen himself before he went back up to continue the show. Why they chose to copy JB's performance was a mystery to me, but even then, the crowd remained hyped.

Just when I was watching the performance intently —
“Shiina-san.”

“Yes?”

Isuzu-senpai stood up and hugged me tight. “W-
What's wrong...!?”

“Thank you, you saved us all. Thank you so much.”

Because I had my face pressed against her huge chest, I wasn't able to see her face. However, I could somewhat sense her relief from the tone of her voice.

“We practiced so hard for this, and almost had this technical fault ruin it all. You’re our savior.”

I remained silent, unable to say anything.

The show went smoothly, save for the appearance of the scary dragon wherein some of the children cried.

The evening performance also concluded without any major problems, attracting almost twice as many guests.

After the park's closure, we had a debriefing at A.M. Dornel-san expressed some words of gratitude and gave us a toast.

It was there when Macaron-san and Tiramie-san spoke to me with sparkling eyes.

"Hmph, I admit defeat, *ron*. You'll be the fairy of music from tomorrow..."

No, it's fine.

"You surprised me, *mi!!!* We really should sing at Alamo some day!"

Uh, I'll pass.

Other cast members also expressed their gratitude for me, some shaking my hands, others hugging me, leaving me crushed by the end of it.

However, this was strange. I was never that extraordinary of person to begin with, and I didn't think I did anything to deserve such treatment either. All I did was sing; I should've been embarrassed, if anything.

Just then, Adachi Eiko-san and Bandou Biino-san joined in and complimented me, making me feel genuinely happy. I wish I could be good friends with them some day.

Kanie-senpai arrived at the canteen late. I hadn't met him since that confrontation at the control room, and he had an expression that seemed like a mix of bitterness, regret and defeat.

Seeing him like that felt great! "E-
Erm, hello."

"What's up with that face? Surely you aren't rejoicing at the shock you gave me, are you?"

"Giku—..."

"Bullseye, huh. That's the first time I heard anyone use say 'Giku—' though."

"I-I'm sorry..."

Kanie-senpai sighed.

"Whatever. I uhh...well...I apologize for what I said earlier. You did well back there. I'm honestly surprised and impressed. And grateful, too. That's all."

"...You don't sound very sincere."

"S-Shut up! I'm bad at things like this. You happy now? I'm only complimenting you just this once, you heard me?"

Kanie-senpai was about to walk off before addressing me again. "Oh and one more thing, Chuujou."

"Y-Yes?"

I was surprised—this was the first time he addressed me

properly.

“We’ll be selling your CDs at retailers, so be sure to practice more.”

“Eh!? W-W-Wait!!! What did you just—”

Kanie-senpai merely informed me of his decision and left, without getting my consent. He walked over to Isuzu-senpai who was standing at a corner and spoke with her. I couldn’t pick out what they were talking about, but Isuzu-senpai seemed happy. It wasn’t her facial expression, though. I could feel it.

So those two *were* indeed close, huh? I couldn’t help but get even more interested about this.

Anyway, figuring that it’d be rude for me to keep staring at them like that, I headed to the drink stall for some orange juice.

“*Mofu?*”

Coincidentally, I bumped into Moffle-san at the stall. Similarly, I haven’t spoken to him since the performance.

“Erm, hello.”

“Good work, *fumo.*”

Moffle-san continued pouring some oolong tea into his glass in silence. He must’ve abstained from alcohol because he still had performances tomorrow.

I did my best and spoke.

“E-Erm...thank you, Moffle-san.” “*Mofu?*
What for?”

“Erm, just now, you mentioned about Dad...”

“Ah, *that*.”

Moffle-san nodded.

“Follow me to the terrace for a bit, will you?”

*

Moffle-san headed for the canteen’s terrace. Contrary to its name, the “terrace” was cramped and old, to the extent that calling it a “veranda” would’ve been more fitting. In essence, this was a smoking corner.

After entering, Moffle-san whipped out his usual Hope cigarette and spoke.

“There’s something I ought to apologize for, *fumo*.”

Moffle-san lit his cigarette and inhaled deeply before puffing out the smoke.

“I actually knew your Dad back then, *fumo*.” “...”

I guess I was right. There was no other possibility since he mentioned him before I sang.

“It’s been 5 years, huh... Well to be fair, it wasn’t as if we were THAT close. He was my drinking buddy at a bar we frequented, *fumo*.”

“Your drinking buddy, you say?”

“Yeah, we met at a small bar in the shopping district of Amagi,

fumo. We'd meet about once a month, but well...I guess we clicked well so we always end up talking a lot."

I never knew about this. I don't remember him drinking that much to begin with, much less frequenting bars. However, I do remember him hanging out late about once a month, usually coming home slightly drunk. Of course, I was usually asleep by then, so I didn't get the chance to speak with him when he was drunk.

"It was then, I heard about you, *fumo*. He spoke about how he was worried about his daughter, you see. You had performed for your school's cultural festival, didn't you? He told me that you were so nervous that you forgot the lines. He was there, right?"

"Yes. He came to give me support."

That happened during my school's cultural festival when I was in my fourth year. Dad raised his voice and shouted, "Do your best, Shiina!" shocking the audience. All that despite me being a mere side character, "Forest Rabbit C," with only one line to say.

"Thanks to him, I was able to recite them."

"Yeah, he told me, *fumo*. He's a modest man even when drunk. I still remember him sounding so happy when he was talking about you."

"I-I see..."

It was hard to imagine the two of them, a chubby fairy of sweets and Dad, sitting at a bar talking to each other. But then again, all of Amaburi's fairies wore a "Lala Patch" that made

them resemble normal human beings to the public. I bet Dad must've been talking to Muffle-san thinking he was another man.

"Your Dad showed me pictures of you when you were young, *fumo*. Now that I think of it, you haven't changed much since then."

That's none of your business.

"But your Dad suddenly stopped coming for a few months, *fumo*. Thinking it was weird, I asked the owner, who then recalled hearing from Dad's colleagues that he had passed away in the line of duty."

"Yes..."

I should've gotten over this a long time ago, yet my eyes still turned watery.

"I couldn't make it for his funeral, and I wasn't exactly close enough to come and visit your place directly, *fumo*. So I ended up visiting his grave by myself. Sorry about that..."

"Is that so..."

"So it must've been a stroke of good fortune that you applied to join the park, *fumo*. Or perhaps it was all thanks to Goddess Libra..."

Muffle-san pressed his cigarette against the ash tray and extinguished it.

"That's all I have to say, *fumo*. I'll see you around."

“E-Erm...please wait!”

I called over to Moffle-san who was about to make his leave. “What’s up, *fumo*?”

“By any chance...”

I wasn’t sure if I should really be asking, but I knew that I would never be at peace without knowing this.

“...were you being strict to me because you knew my Dad...?”

Moffle-san remained silent and looked at me with the corner of his eye, before turning around and replied.

“That’s a silly question, *fumo*. I’m not that stuck-up to do such a thing. I was just pissed at how clumsy you were.”

“T-That figures...”

I guess I should never have asked... How embarrassing. “But after seeing how you did today, I’m relieved, *fumo*.” “Eh?”

Moffle-san walked off without elaborating, and considering his mysterious personality, I had no idea what he truly meant.

Nevertheless, hearing that made me relax just a little. Perhaps Moffle-san was a lot more shy than I thought?

Isuzu-senpai approached me when I returned to the canteen. “Shiina-san.”

“Ah, yes?”

“You sent a mail saying you had something to speak to me

about this morning, didn't you? I can already guess what this is about, though..."

"Oh, about that..."

I realized I'd completely forgotten about it.

This morning, I sent an email to Isuzu-senpai with an intention to tender my resignation, thinking that I was at my limits. That was what I'd meant to do, but—

"I'm well aware that things have been rather awkward for you from the beginning. Kanie-kun and Moffle have been trying to get you to stay, but I personally won't force you."

"Okay..."

"Things might not necessarily change for the better if you stayed. In fact, it might get worse. But even then..."

Isuzu-senpai stopped.

Just what was did she foresee? Her action made me hesitant and confused.

"Never mind, forget what I just said. Besides, there was no guarantee that'd happen, anyway."

"..."

"At any rate, I'll listen to what you have to say, so what do you intend to do from now?"

I would not deny that I felt great after being praised for my singing. Of course, what's more important was that I was able to meet these grownups during the past few weeks, something

I could never have done had I stayed in school.

These “grownups” weren’t particularly spectacular—never doing things the right way and causing nothing but trouble. Despite that, they continue to struggle against fate.

Perhaps I could struggle with them for a little longer. “Please forgive my selfish request,” I said. “But I—”

After hearing the rest of my sentence, Isuzu-senpai smiled, reminded me about tomorrow’s reporting time and said before leaving:

“Likewise, I look forward to working with you.”

Right, I’ll be in your care.

Chapter 2: The Magic App

Part 1

One fine evening in Amagi Brilliant Park, Isuzu was walking through the underground tunnel when Muse called out to her.

“Isuzu-san! Isuzu-san! Check out this cool app I found!” “An app, you say?”

“Take a look! It’s a camera app named *MagiCam True Snapshot!*.” Muse said while grabbing out her smartphone.

“This title sounds oddly suspicious...”

“I think they didn’t have a choice. The devs are from Maple Land; I’m guessing they chose this name as a way of standing out from the crowd.”

“You really think so?”

“Yup! Anyway, this app lets us see a person’s human appearance. Let’s see...oh hey, how convenient!”

Wanipi could be seen walking at the opposite side of the underground tunnel. Wanipi was a mascot that resembled a reptile. Of course, that was not a costume, and there was nobody inside of him.

“Let’s take a picture of him.”

Muse took a quick snap of Wanipi. He continued walking off without noticing it. After processing the image, the phone displayed a picture of a lanky male yawning. The figure was

wearing an 80s style jumper, a pair of damaged jeans, and leather boots.

“You’re saying *this* is Wanipi?”

“Seems like it. According to this app, at least.” “I find this hard to believe...”

After all, there was no reason to trust this just because it was a “Magical App.” For all they knew, this could very well be a scam.

“Also, this app does not work on fairies who already have human appearances. For example, if I were to take a picture of myself...”

Muse pointed the camera at herself and snapped a picture. The app displayed an image of her normal appearance.

“...nothing happens. Most of my family have human appearances, so... Oh, but my brother takes on the form of a fairy, just so you know.”

The residents of Magical Realms take on two different types of appearances. Isuzu and Muse looked like normal human beings, whereas the others like Wanipi had more fairy-like appearances. Also, a fairy’s appearance was not something that was immediately determined upon birth—there were plenty of fairies who have had both appearances when young. Most of them eventually keep a certain appearance after puberty, depending on their upbringing, surroundings and personal tastes.

Generally speaking, males tended to get fairy looks while

females chose to go with human appearances. Then again, it was very easy for one to change their appearance even in adulthood, so it wasn't right to draw this comparison based on gender. It really was as easy as changing one's hairstyle.

There was a catch, however. Changing one's appearance not only costs quite a bit of money, it was also bad for one's health and beauty. As such, there weren't many who would casually change their appearance on a whim.

"So this app only works one-way, huh..."

"That's right. So Isuzu-san, care to join me in my journey to expose our cast members' true appearances?"

"Why me?"

"No particular reason, actually. It's just that it's a lot more fun doing this with friends."

Thinking about it, Isuzu wasn't exactly very busy today, so hanging out with Muse for a breather should be perfectly fine.

"...I guess I can make it. Let's go."

And so the two of them began their hunt in the underground passageway of the park. Their first target was Wrench-kun from the General Affairs department. He was pushing a cart piled with timber and paint cans, heading towards Wild Valley.

"Wrench-san, one sec!" "Hmm?"

Muse took a quick snap at him, before letting him walk off

while muttering “Just what’s going on with these two...”

“I honestly can’t imagine what Wrench-kun’s human form is like...”

“We’ll find out soon enough. Look, it’s done.”

The figure displayed was a man in his 40s to 50s who sported a crew cut with a towel tied around his forehead. He had a small but tanned and sturdily build body, and was wearing a running shirt, a pair of knickerbockers, and tabi boots.

“I see...he does indeed give off this kind of vibe.” “You frown too much, Wrench-san! Next! Let’s go.”

Following that, the two of them headed to the administrative building where they bumped into Dornel. He looked tired and was holding on to a tablet computer, suggesting he was on the way back from a meeting.

“Dornel-san! Mind if we take a picture of you?”

“Huh, what’s up, *neru*...? Wait, isn’t photography prohibited backstage?”

“Not a problem if we’re never caught.”

Muse took a picture of Dornel.

“Well, whatever, *neru*. Ah, I’m starving...”

Dornel walked off, not even bothering to take a look at the photo.

“All right! Let’s see what he looks like. Woah...”

Muse scorned upon looking at the person shown in her phone. Likewise, Isuzu gave an “ugh...”

The person who seemed to be in his 30s had a deathly complexion and ruffled-up hair. He was wearing a checkered shirt with a pair of chinos. The sloppy whiskers that extended from his meat-chin and the pair of heavy eyelids gave him a sickly appearance.

“His decade spent in that cave really shows...” “He looks like he’s possessed...”

“Should we show it to him? It might help him kick his snacking habit, at least for a while...”

“B-Bad idea! He’ll shrivel in misery...!”
“But...”

“A-At any rate let’s go! Onward!”

While walking into the building the two met Tricen, who also seemed to be on his way back.

“Are you heading home?”

“Oh hey, Isuzu-san, Muse-san. Nope, we have two potential sponsors coming soon, so I ought to make my rounds before leaving.”

“Tricen-san, mind if we take a picture of you?”

“Oh, sure, it’d be an honor! Are we taking it together? We should totally do a smoochy-huggy pose.”

“Nope, just you.”

“Oh...”

While the image was being processed, Muse asked Tricen if he wanted to have a look, but he shot a glance at his watch instead and jumped.

“Oh crap, the bus is coming soon. I’ll take a look next time, see ya!”

Just as Tricen dashed out of the building, the image was ready for viewing.

“Let’s see...”

Tricen looked like a spectacled businessman with an average build. He was holding on to a cheap suit and gently smiling at the camera. For some reason he had his hands out with his palms facing each other, which was a pose commonly seen in business magazines.

“A rather sketchy appearance, I’d say...”

“But you can’t deny that it accurately portrays his personality! Now, where shall we go next...”

“There shouldn’t be many people in this building right now, and Kanie-kun’s human, anyway. I guess we should try Sorcerers’ Hill.”

“Yeah.”

With that, the two turned around and headed for Sorcerers’ Hill. Their first target was Tiramie.

Tiramie had finished his shift had just returned backstage.

“*Mi! Mi!* Listen to this, Isuzu-chan and Muse-chan! One of the guests had this REALLY hot sister, *mi!* And she was with some ugly and fat guy! He must’ve gotten her at a hostess bar or something, *mi!*”

Muse took a picture of Tiramie, ignoring him and letting him rattle on.

“What? You wanted a portrait of me, *mi?* You could’ve just said so, heh.”

“No, not really...”

“We’ve got what we came for, so go on, get back to whatever you were doing.”

The two ladies waved their hands and shooed Tiramie away.

“What, that’s cold, *mi!* At least show me what you guys are doing before chasing—”

“Tiramie-saaan!”

Bandou Biino, Tiramie’s assistant, called out to him from outside.

“I’m sorry, but we have a premium pass guest who has yet to take a picture with you. Please come back!”

Tiramie sighed and returned to the stage.

“I bet he’s got an annoying facial expression, seeing how insensitive he is.”

“You’re right, I’m guessing his face should look like Dornel’s.” “Woah, hold it right there. That’s a little too...”

Just then, the processing was complete. The image that appeared on the phone's screen was —

“Really? You’re kidding me...!”

“Eh...? That’s...”

The image that appeared on Muse’s phone was one of a blond and handsome man. The man in his mid-20s had a slim model’s build and wore a cheeky grin. He had a simple black shirt and cargo pants, and one could sneak a peek through the collar of his V-neck and admire the outline of his collarbone!!!

The hottie in the picture could be seen talking to the photographer with a friendly smile.

Both of them stood with their hands and expressions frozen in disbelief.

“E-Eh? Who is this guy? This has got to be a bug, right?”

“This is bad! Isn’t this the Zac Efron look? That’s totally my type...”

Just what were these two ladies struggling with?

“Pull yourself together. I’m sure this is all just a mistake. Let’s go.”

“O-Okay... You’re right, this is definitely a bug...yeah...”

Muse and Isuzu dragged themselves out of the scene and moved on to Macaron’s Music Theater. They met Macaron just when they entered. He had just finished performing on the small stage, and seeing the harmonica he was holding in his hands,

today's theme must've been "blues."

"Yo. Today's been busy and I'm tired, *ron*. Go buy me some beer, will you?"

"We're still operating; get your shots after work."

"*Ron*... Come on, I'm sure one can won't hurt, would it? Pretty please?"

"No means no!"

"Tch, you guys are so stingy, *ron*."

Saying that, Macaron pulled out a Marlboro stick and lit it. By the way, Macaron had unilaterally declared his music theater a smoking area.

"Ah...hits the spot, *ron*."

Letting him do as he pleased, Muse pointed the camera at him and clicked the button.

(Definitely an old geezer...)

(No doubt about that. He gives the impression that he's aging quickly...)

Noticing the two of them mumbling among themselves, Macaron gazed at them and asked, "What's up?"

"No, it's nothing..."

After a brief silence, the image of another sexy guy was rendered and displayed on her phone.

"This can't be!?"

“EEEEHHH...!?”

The person this time was a man in his mid-30s who looked like he'd accumulated much hardship under his belt, making him unexpectedly charming.

As expected, he was slim and had long arms and legs. His long, disheveled black hair ran through most of his face, giving him a very untidy look. In contrast, the man was wearing a nicely ironed white long-sleeved shirt with a pair of simple but quality slacks. His silver necklace and harmonica that he was wearing shimmered in the mild darkness.

Furthermore, the sight of him smoking blithely after a performance was really attractive to women—

“What's up with the two of you? If it doesn't concern me then leave me alone...”

The one staring at the ladies was the same old sheep mascot. It was difficult to draw any similarity between Macaron and the image displayed on Muse's phone.

“P-Pardon? Oh, right. S-Sorry for disturbing you!” “D-Do take your time to rest, okay? We'll be off...”

Retreating back to the underground passage, the two of them threw their gazes back at the picture.

“W-What's up with this picture? Since when did he look like such a playboy musician?”

“This is totally my type...not good...”

Once again, what were these two ladies getting so worked up with? And wasn't the last person her type too!?

"I-I knew it. T-This is definitely a bug." "Y-You're right. But still...ugh..."

Isuzu and Muse frowned in agony.

"What are you two doing at a place like this, *fumo*" Right then, someone called out to them.

"Hyaa!?"

The two of them stiffened up and creaked their necks backward to find Moffle standing behind them. He was holding a croquette from Maple Kitchen and a bottle of oolong tea.

"M-Moffle-san..."

"You two look sick, *fumo*. Were you watching something traumatizing?"

Moffle had hit a bullseye, so to speak. His perceptiveness can be scary at times like this.

"I-It's just girl talk. Please don't worry about us." "Oh, really? Anyway, any clue where Seiya's at?"

"He's probably in his office in the administration building as usual, I guess?"

"Roger, *fumo*. Ciao." "W-Wait, Moffle-san!"

Muse called out to Moffle before he could walk away.

“*Fumo*? What’s up?”

“Well you see, we’re kinda in the middle of collating pictures of our staff members, so if you would let us take one of yourself...”

“Isn’t photography prohibited backstage, *fumo*?”

“We’re just using this for our thanksgiving party, and not for anything else! So please, just this once?”

Isuzu blurted the first excuse that came to her mind. In fact, she was quite impressed with what she came up with, though she understood that she should not abuse her position in the future.

“*Mofu*. I guess I don’t particularly mind. Would this pose be fine?”

“That’s good! Hold still for a bit...”

Muse clicked her phone’s camera button once. “That’s all, right? I’ll be taking my leave, then.”

Moffle waddled off, leaving the two ladies who were staring at the phone in anticipation alone.

“Why did you take it? Didn’t we confirm that it’s broken?”

“Think of it! Could you forgive yourself for not getting his picture after coming this far!?”

“...I guess we might as well...”

“But what are we gonna do if Moffle-san ends up being a cutie too...”

“No, it should ultimately even out, so I’d say we’ll get a plain looking guy.”

“Plain’s too much. It had better turn out like Wrench-kun’s image to compensate.”

“Though let’s hope it doesn’t go overboard and give us a picture like Dornel’s...”

Once again, the image was successfully processed and displayed on the screen.

“Woahhhhhhh!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!”

The two of them jumped in unison.

It was as if ○ragorn from ○○○○ *of the Rings* was standing there.

The man in this picture was tall and stout. He had an unshaven look with dark brown hair covering the sides of this face, revealing a sharp gaze burning with determination. His clothes gave a youthful and outgoing impression. In his two hands were a bottle of oolong tea and a croquette.

“How can this...I don't even...”

“You're kidding me...This is absolutely my kind of guy... This is...just too cruel...mmm...”

Muse grew faint as she desperately suppressed her nosebleed, which was creating bloodstains on the floor.

“Like I said, this is definitely a scam.”

“H-How can you be so sure about that!? Though if this were true, we'd be in deep trouble, don't you think???”

“T-That's true...this will definitely destroy relationships between staff members...”

Indeed, this problem was a huge concern, especially for the females in the park.

“L-Let's verify if this app is legit.”

Isuzu forced energy into her wobbly legs and spoke.

“We’ll take another picture of them and compare with the previous shots. If it turns out to be different, we know we’ve got a fraud.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Since Moffle had long disappeared from sight, the two of them decided to use Macaron as their specimen. When they returned to the music theater, Macaron could be seen, dead tired and resting on a pipe chair.

“Ron? What do you want...?” Ignoring him, Muse started the app. “All right, let’s do this.”

“Okay.”

Right then, Muse stood frozen. The click sound whenever she took a picture wasn’t played, and her eyes remained fixated on the screen.

“What’s wrong?”

“I-Isuzu-san...this is...”

Upgrade to MagiCam Pro

Thank you for using MagiCam Lite.

MagiCam Lite users are allowed up to 8 shots, after which they must upgrade. Click here to get MagiCam Pro and enjoy unlimited usage.

So we have pay to use this again? Absurd!

She clenched her teeth in anger and clicked the link. “Wha...”

The price of the pro version was 4800 yen.

“4800 yen? That’s waaay too expensive!” “I can’t believe they’d do such a thing...”

A grim, crimson aura enveloped the two ladies.

“Woah...what’s up with the two of you, *ron*? There’s a scary aura emanating from you two!”

Ignoring Macaron, who was frantically waving his hands, Isuzu and Muse barely controlled their rage and stormed out of the music theater.

*

Throughout the rest of the day, the two of them would stare at the 4800 yen payment screen in agony. Eventually when it was time for the park to close, the two of them realized that they could still download the app in Isuzu’s phone for use.

“So, are we really going to do it?”

“Yes. Wait, maybe not. What should we do...”

At the very least, they’d cooled their heads and were able to think calmly. However, they were unsure if verifying the legitimacy of the app was the right thing to do. They feared they might lose something important to them should they discover the truth.

After contemplating long and hard—

“Let’s just stop this...”

“You’re right...”

In the end, they decided not to open Pandora’s box. May mysteries remain forever as mysteries.

And as such, the two agreed to forget whatever they saw during their adventure that day.

Nonetheless, the link to MagiCam Lite remains in Isuzu’s phone to this day.

Chapter 3: Attendance Issues!

Part 1

“Say, Kanie-kun. I’m genuinely concerned about you, you know?”

Konoike-sensei, Kanie Seiya’s homeroom teacher, said to him in a counseling room in the school’s north building.

“You’ve only attended classes for...10 days in the month of April. First your ‘poor health,’ then ‘family problems,’ excuses after excuses. You’re going a little too far, don’t you think?”

You’re not getting along well with your classmates, and are at risk of being isolated from them. I believe it’s about time you come clean...”

Deep inside, Seiya was starting to become annoyed. He’d been entrusted a nearly impossible task at a hopeless theme park and had been working to the bone ever since. He simply had no time to waste chatting with this lowly teacher who was “concerned” about him.

It’s none of your business. Just so you know, I’m dealing with problems caused by shitty civil servants like you, with the fate of hundreds of staff members in my hands! You lot can just drown in your own hypocrisy for all I care!

Seiya really wanted to spit these words in her face. But alas, he had to restrain himself.

“I apologize...”

Seiya spoke in an apologetic tone.

“...but I really wasn’t lying. My body’s frail to begin with, and so...”

He heaved a deep sigh.

That went pretty well. I managed to strike a balance in tone, so it won’t be surprising for that woman to be melting in sympathy and say “Is that so...I’m sorry for doubting you.”

In fact, that was exactly what she said.

“Is that so...I’m sorry for doubting you, Kanie-kun.”

“Don’t worry about it...”

Nicely done, civil servant. Don’t ever bother me again.

However, the teacher added.

“...but even then, you might want to fix your attendance, or else you’ll be repeating a year.”

“Wait, you can’t possibly just...”

“There’s absolutely no flexibility in this.” “...”

“I look forward to seeing you in class more often, got it?”

*

“Took you awhile, Kanie-kun.”

Sento Isuzu, Seiya’s classmate-cum-secretary, spoke just as he was released from the counseling room. It appeared that she’d been waiting at the hallway throughout the whole session.

“We’ve wasted enough time; let us review your schedule for the rest of the day. You have a meeting with the publicity team at 1700 hours and an appointment to observe a rehearsal at 1800 hours. During that time, we’ll settle all our emails before we attend the meeting with our stage directors at 1830. After that, at 1900 hours...”

“Please just...stop. I swear I’m gonna die from this one day.” Seiya interrupted Isuzu with a wave of his arms.

“But you’re not scheduled to die just yet.”

Isuzu spoke in her usual formal tone. It would’ve been better if she could show some concern for him, but alas, this was Isuzu’s style.

“At any rate, let’s go. I’ll brief you in detail in the car.”

Isuzu grabbed Seiya’s hand and dragged him towards the school’s gate. Not wanting to deal with the troublesome rumors that would arise should they be seen like this by other classmates, Seiya quickly shook her off. He watched Isuzu as they ran, and did not sense any feelings of hurt in her.

“...I don’t know anymore...” “Don’t know about?” “Whatever. Let’s hurry.”

They exited the school and rushed to the back to get into the company car Isuzu called to save time. Lately, Seiya has been commuting to the park via this car more frequently instead of

his bike. He'd have no complaints if this *company car* was a Mercedes or something, but it was in fact a Daihatsu sedan driven by none other than errand boy Tricen. Furthermore, his driving sucked, and having to deal with his erratic braking and acceleration made Seiya sick.

Thinking back, this was rubbish compared to the Lexus and Mercedes escort vehicles he sat in back when he was younger.

I guess I'd be happy as long as the person sitting beside me isn't my Mom...

"So what did she talk to you about in the counseling room?"

Isuzu inquired after explaining the details of Seiya's schedule to him.

"She gave me a long lecture about my attendance, as expected."

"...After all, you'd miss a whole semester of school if we continue at this rate."

Isuzu said while checking the schedule on her phone. "Yeah, she told me that too."

"If you're aware of the consequences, you could always take a break from studying. You'd have no problems working full-time from tomorrow."

"You really need to put some emotion into your words..."

Despite saying that, Seiya realized that what Isuzu said was true.

After all, he'd never found school enjoyable in the first place,

and wasn't able to find anyone he could really click with. Classes were a pain, and the breaks between them weren't any better.

"...but I can't do that." "Why not?"

"Because I eventually have to return." "I see."

If he were to take a break now, there was no way he would be in the mood to go back to that damned school again. Sitting in a classroom full of juniors was out of the question.

"I guess I could always drop out of school altogether. Once the dust settles in the park, I could gun for the high school equivalency examination. Shouldn't be hard considering my intellect."

"Says the guy who isn't even able to handle high school anymore. It really isn't as easy as you think it is, you know."

"Definitely easier than getting 300 million guests for your damned park."

"..."

Isuzu fell dead silent. Seiya had intended it to be a joke, but Isuzu must have treated it as an honest insult, as if he was blaming the park for forcing him into this situation right now.

"That's a little too much, in my humble opinion."

Tricen, who was listening in on the conversation as he was

driving, spoke up.

“I’m referring to your dropping out of school. We’d never go so far as to force you to do such a thing.”

So you’re bringing us back to the matter at hand, huh? You’re certainly more clever than you look.

“Besides, we can’t just rely on you forever; we’re doing our best as well. Hell, I’d double my work hours if that allowed you to continue going to school.”

Sigh, I guess it’s still hopeless.

As much as Seiya wanted to stay silent and happily accept his offer, there was no way he could afford to do that and watch them die.

“Listen up, Tricen. Not everything can be solved just by telling yourself that you’ll ‘do your best.’ And don’t think I’ll happily smile and say ‘I’ll leave it to you’ either. Do you seriously believe that working your way through with brute force is enough to save the park?”

“Well, kinda...”

“What? The park’s in this sorry state because you guys are focusing on the wrong things! There’s nothing more pathetic than a hardworking idiot. Do the world a favor and jump into a concrete grinder!”

“...That’s mean. Besides, I doubt I’ll putting in hard work anyway; no need to worry about a lazy idiot.”

“Precisely why I can’t count on you lot! Ah, whatever. Just drive, filthy reptile.”

“What do you mean by ‘reptile’? I recently read that dinosaurs are genetically closer to birds...”

“Okay, okay, just drive. Wait, you didn’t just run a red light, did you!?”

Just then, the car whizzed past the large junction without stopping for the red light. There could’ve been an accident if they were not careful.

“Eh? Oh, whoops. Even I am appalled by my own absent-mindedness.”

At that moment, Seiya considered getting a motorcycle license. That way, he’d lead a safer life by hiding one near school and using it to commute to work.

“Anyway, if you’re serious about dropping out...”

Tricen began speaking again after his driving stabilized. “...you might want to consult Latifa-sama first. She’s the one

who’s gonna take responsibility for your actions, after all. You’ll need to seek permission from her...”

“Why so serious all of a sudden...?”

Of course Seiya understood what he was trying to say. “I think so too.”

Isuzu added.

“I don’t mean to force you, but you really should consult her

before making a decision.”

Part 2

“I’ll never approve of this!”

Seiya was speaking with Latifa Fleuranza at the sky garden when she raised her voice in assertion. Her tone was abnormally strict, considering her normally kind and gentle voice. If she hadn’t lost her vision, her gaze would have silenced Seiya’s will to drop out of school.

It was almost midnight when Seiya decided to speak with Latifa before she went to bed. There were only the two of them at the garden. There was certainly no need for her to be exercising her authority as the princess of Maple Land, but even then, she remained stern.

In other words, this was a non-negotiable matter to her.

“I swore never to impose on the Oracle’s chosen one. If we were to ruin your life, I believe that our park would suffer the same fate. Do you know why?”

“I...don’t really know...”

Seiya mumbled to himself. He wasn’t able to maintain his usual arrogance in front of Latifa.

“If you were to ruin your own future because of my incompetence, then that would mean our park has no right to gather the dreams of its guests. We can never turn someone’s happiness into sorrow, and this is the one principle that we won’t change. And so...if you were to drop out of school, then I’ll relieve you of your duties as the park’s manager.”

Just then, Latifa's voice became shallow.

"Of course, I didn't really mean what I said, since I'm counting on you. So..."

By now, she was on the verge of tears. "...so if you were to ruin your own life..."

"Okay, I understand. Please, just calm down..."

Seiya lightly patted her shoulders. Normally, a simple gesture would have been enough to convey the message, but alas, a blind person could not see it. As a result, the two of them moved closer to each other.

"Besides, life's overrated, you know? I'm just a high-schooler, so this shouldn't be that big of a deal."

"But Kanie-sama, I..."

"I'm just discussing this as a possibility. We can always work something else out instead."

"But...but..."

"So please don't take this so seriously. It really is just a hypothetical situation."

Hearing that, Latifa raised her slender arms and placed them against Seiya's chest.

"...so you will continue going to school?"

"Yeah, I will."

"Are you sure?"

“Don’t worry, I won’t drop out of school.”

Seiya took a look at her smooth and slender fingers and had the sudden temptation to hold her hand in assurance. The person in front of him had sincerely wished for his happiness, and he could not afford to betray her.

Of course to Seiya, the equation “high school = happiness” was utter nonsense. Nonetheless, he complied because he didn’t want to make her worried.

“...Okay.”

Latifa said after calming herself down.

“I’m sorry. I realize that even my worries add to your burden.” “Don’t worry, this is still an acceptable amount.”

“Thank you.”

Latifa gave a lonely smile.

“I like the Kanie-sama who says this better.” “...What’s up with that? Don’t tease me, please.”

“I’m not teasing you. I simply expressed how I truly felt.” “Cut it out already.”

Seiya tried to sound gloomy, but seeing how Latifa giggled without a trace of hurt, his act must have failed.

“I’ll be going. I have a busy day tomorrow.”

“Okay.”

As he started feeling uncomfortable, Seiya made a quick exit

from the sky garden and called it a day.

*

The next day —

“Rejoice, Kanie-kun! Your attendance problems are solved, *ron!*”

Seiya was busy working with his laptop when Macaron suddenly entered his office. For some reason, the sheep-like mascot had a tsugaru-jamisen[1] in his hand.

“At the very least knock before coming in. And what happened to my secretary? She’d never let you enter...”

“Isuzu-chan’s helping out with the trash disposal this morning, *ron.*”

Since when was garbage disposal a secretary’s job? Just what on earth is she doing?

“Anyway, what’s up?”

“Like I said, consider your attendance problems solved! You mentioned that you’re struggling with poor attendance in school earlier, didn’t you?”

Indeed, Seiya had just been lectured by his homeroom teacher about his attendance yesterday. Konoike-sensei must be disappointed, considering how he ditched school the day following the counseling session.

“So rejoice, *ron!* Take a look at this!”

Isuzu entered the office from behind Macaron. Her appearance was normal, save for an unusual expression — a cheeky grin — on

her face.

“I thought you went to help out with garbage disposal?” “I’m done,” said Isuzu.

“...right.”

“How do I look, Kanie-kun? Do I look sexy today?” “... what?”

“Never mind, forget what I said. But hey, Kanie-kun. I’ve been your personal secretary and schoolmate for a while now, shouldn’t you have gotten the hints?”

“???????”

Seiya knew the saying that many people turn strange in spring, but Isuzu’s words were going way beyond that.

“You seem confused, *ron*.”

“Really confused, indeed.”

Isuzu and Macaron let out an evil laugh. “Listen, Kanie-kun...”

Isuzu bent forward and snuggled up to Seiya. She unbuttoned the top few buttons of her uniform and pressed her large chest against his face.

“H-Hey, mmm...!”

“I can’t stand being *just* your secretary any longer. Let me know if there’s anything troubling you; I’ll do anything you say to make you feel better, okay? After all, I’m in lo—”

Isuzu’s cheeky expression and teary eyes filled Seiya’s vision. He could almost see her moist breath. Just what was she doing?

“T-Time out!”

Seiya backed up shouted.

“Sento, you know I’m a busy man. What are you thinking, fooling around with me together with that sheep?”

“Ignore Macaron, Kanie-kun. Focus on me; look me in the eyes.” “Pull yourself together, Sento.”

“I’m just as nervous as you, so don’t run away, Kanie-kun.” Isuzu squeezed her lips together.

“H-Hey...”

“Did you really think I was Isuzu? Well, too bad, it’s me, *mi!!!*”

Saying that, Isuzu removed her clothes. Actually, “clothes” wasn’t appropriate, because it looked as if her whole body was torn open. Tiramie emerged from the “suit.”

“What...!?”

“HAHAHAHA!!!”

Tiramie and Macaron exploded in laughter. They held their stomachs to contain their laughter, grabbed the “Isuzu suit” and slammed it on the table.

“What on earth...”

Seeing Seiya’s confused expression, Tiramie pointed at the suit. “It’s a ‘transformation suit,’ *mi!*”

“The hell’s that!?”

“It’s magical attire that can be shaped into another person, *ron*. You saw it in action at my attraction, didn’t you? The diggeries used them to role-play as gangsters.”

Speaking of which, Seiya recalled seeing the diggeries using this special suit to take on human appearances. Simply putting it on made them look like big and strong thugs.

“It’s a one-of-a-kind treasure, *mi!* It can maintain its shape without getting affected by the shape and build of the wearer!”

“Up until recently, we weren’t able to customize these suits to a specific person, *ron*. But thanks to the diggeries, we were able to design them to accurately match the 3D data of any person out there!”

Another one of the diggeries’ achievements, huh. Thank God we took them in as staff members.

“However, making these suits require a lot of rare materials, so we aren’t able to mass-produce them, *mi!*”

“This suit of Isuzu-chan is the demo product, *ron*. We made good use of all the pictures Tiramie collected through the years. Unfortunately, we only had data on her external appearance, so we weren’t able to reproduce the things we couldn’t see, *ron!*”

“And so we made them up according to our liking, *mi!* We designed her tits according to my tastes.”

“You overdid the size, *ron.* And it has a strange gloss to it. You trying to be Shiromasa[2] or something?”

“But what about the color?” “Yeah, the color’s perfect, *ron.*”

Controlling his headache, Seiya interrupted.

“So how exactly is this magical suit going to improve my attendance?”

“We still have some leftover materials to build another suit. This time, we’ll shape it to look like you, *ron!*”

“Ah...”

“It’ll be a perfect disguise, *mi!* We just need a cast member to put it on and attend classes in your stead!”

“I see...”

Seiya understood the concept of the plan.

But Seiya’s attendance wasn’t the biggest problem at hand. The two clowns should be more worried about the real Isuzu who happened to be standing behind them.

Her face’s emotionless as usual, but I can tell she’s angry without even trying.

And I’ve got nothing to do with this.

Noticing Seiya raising his line of sight, Macaron and Tiramie

turned around. Seeing Isuzu behind them, the two whispered an “OH SHIT!” to each other.

“I-Isuzu-chan...how long have you been standing there, *mi...*”

“You haven’t been listening in on everything, have you? Such bad manners, *ron...*”

Isuzu walked in, grabbed the suit and examined the chest area before mumbling “they aren’t that big...” to herself.

“What about the color?”

Tiramie asked, as if asking for more trouble.

“Shut up. You two are dead, you hear me?” “...B-Bring it on, bitch!!!”

And so the two of them bit the bullets head on like real men. Perhaps after enduring so many slaughtering sessions, they finally realized that dying while running away was more pitiful.

*

Dumping the two corpses in the infirmary and hiding the suit of herself, Isuzu returned to Seiya’s office. It looked like Moffle came after hearing the ruckus as well.

“...I actually think this isn’t a bad idea, *fumo.*”

Moffle folded his arms after hearing the whole story from Seiya.

“It’s hard to admit this, but we absolutely need Seiya’s strength in order to survive, *fumo.* Besides, we won’t get caught as long as we keep our mouths shut in class. You don’t have any friends

anyway, do you?"

"S-Shut up! Even I have some—"

"Absolutely none. Zilch."

Isuzu interrupted without hesitation.

"Tch..."

"Then problem solved, *fumo*. I suggest we go ahead with Macaron's plan. What do you think, Isuzu?"

"Agreed."

Isuzu reluctantly nodded.

I guess their plan makes sense. It's not as if I speak much in class anyway, and I don't particularly care who attends school in my place as long as they keep their mouth shut. The problem comes when there are tests to take. I guess I'd have no choice but to attend then. I never had any intention to move on to university in the first place, so I'd settle for the bare minimum score.

After all, I'm a genius. I'd get by without even studying.

But even then, Seiya's results have been strange recently. There are many cases of "ex-geniuses" who begin to struggle upon entering high school despite being the top student in middle school, which could be attributed to the increase in subjects that required actual effort rather than mere talent. Thankfully,

Seiya was still able to scrape by... "So what now?"

Moffle said.

“I can assign some free cast members a schedule as long as you give the green light, *fumo*. You might wanna make a call soon, since we’re gonna have to change the timetable for May as well.”

“All right. Let’s give this a shot.”

TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

[1]: A Tsugaru-jamisen is an instrument used to play shamisen music.

[2]: Shiromasa is the short-form for the name of artist Masamune Shirow. He is known for his glossy/shiny and provocative art.

Part 3

Isuzu was chosen to replace Seiya in class for the first day. After all, she attends classes in Amagi High and knew Seiya's behavior there too. They figured it'd be best to get someone with a low chance of failing for the first trial run.

Even then...

Isuzu thought to herself as she walked past the school gates.

I can't help but feel strange going to school looking like Seiya...

The image reflected on the glass door looked exactly like Seiya. The diggeries had managed to create a transformation suit that perfectly recreated his appearance last night. Because this was a magical item, it could operate despite the difference in proportions between Seiya and Isuzu. The only weird thing she felt was the abnormally tall point of view, which could be attributed to the fact that she was looking through the suit's perspective.

Ah, my feet are pointing a little inward.

Seiya wasn't the type who would walk bow-legged either. She had to mimic his elegant, confident, and manly appearance.

This is harder than I thought...

He always had a really straight posture, looking down on others with a condescending look on his face.

Wait, that might be true, but he wears his unpleasant facial expression more often. His eyebrows slope inwards and he always

appears frustrated at something, like this...

Even then, something felt off to Isuzu. Every time he faced her, Seiya seemed a little more gentle and kind than this. Of course, that could just be her over-imagination. She couldn't help but realize that he treats her differently, though.

"Kanie-senpai?"

Someone called out from beside, shocking Isuzu.

The one responsible was Chuujou Shiina. Naturally, she was not informed about the plan, given that she was just a part-timer.

"Oh hey. Good morning, Chuujou-san."

Oh no. Did I just blow my cover?

"S-Sorry?"

"Ahem...Chuujou, I mean. Nice weather today, huh?"

Isuzu tried to salvage the situation, but Shiina remained skeptical.

"Y-You think so? It looks cloudy to me..."

In fact, the weather was anything but "nice." It was starting to drizzle outside.

"Don't worry about it. So, what's up?"

"Oh, I was just a little concerned about you, since you were acting strangely just now. Are you okay?"

"O-Of course. There's nothing wrong." "Right..."

Isuzu took a deep breath and adjusted her outfit.

“Putting that aside, take a good look at me. What do you think?”

“Huh? You look normal to me.”

“Is that so? Then that’s good.”

Isuzu cleared her throat in satisfaction. To be honest, mimicking Seiya’s manner of speech felt like performing at a grand theater, and she had to reassure herself that she was doing fine to get the nervousness out of her chest.

“...But if I had to, I’d say you seem a lot merrier today.”

“Really?”

“Yes. You normally wouldn’t even acknowledge my presence.”

“W-What?”

“Yes... S-So erm, I’m glad you spoke to me today.”

Saying just that, Shiina turned and ran ahead to her shoe locker. Isuzu could tell Shiina was earnest by her flustered face as she left.

Kanie-kun...just how have you been treating her all this while?

Isuzu cleared her thoughts and headed for her class’s shoe locker. Realizing her mistake, she stopped and turned towards Seiya’s locker instead. And just when she opened it—

She found an envelope inside. “...”

It was definitely not a normal envelope—it was bright pink and

had an indigo heart seal on it.

Get a hold of yourself. This is a bomb.

Isuzu quickly stashed it in her bag and walked in as if nothing happened. She put all her effort into making sure she acted normal, which also meant she could not hesitate when putting on her shoes.

*

Unsurprisingly, the envelope was a love letter. This is what was written in it:

I've always liked you since first year.

People always tell me otherwise, but I know that you're a nice person. And although we were in different classes, I've always been watching you from the distance. I'm sorry, but because of that, I could also tell when you were feeling down or lonely.

You would look into the distance with those lonely eyes, and my heart would skip a beat when I see that.

Surely you'd think I'm an idiot, but I'm serious. I want to share whatever it is you always gaze at.

Sorry, that sounded weird.

If you don't mind, please let me tell you my feelings just this once. I'll be waiting for you behind the gym after school.

Isuzu secretly read the letter during class and thought, *confessing behind a gym at this time and age? This is probably a prank from the 70s.*

On top of that, the writer's name was not written on it, so what could she be expecting? She'd have no right to complain if her letter was ignored.

The love letter appeared to be handwritten, and the handwriting was definitely written by a girl. A lot of effort must've been put in if this were a prank, but Isuzu could tell the writer was serious when writing this.

Even then, for some reason Isuzu felt annoyed. This person was writing as if she knew a lot about Seiya. Isuzu could picture this girl looking down on her in arrogance and saying "I know Seiya better than you." To be fair, this was probably the kind of girl who would even consider dating him. Her finding him must have been similar to finding a gem in a secondhand store.

However, Isuzu couldn't accept this. This girl was too naïve, falling in love for someone merely because they were a "nice person." This would normally be all right, but definitely not for Seiya.

After all, it's all because of his looks, isn't it? She's judging his character solely on appearance here.

Unfortunately, that man's arrogant expressions aren't worth complimenting, and his character isn't attractive either. So why can't you —

Ah, wait a minute.

Why am I reacting so negatively over this? I must handle the situation neutrally...

So...what should I do?

It wouldn't hurt for Isuzu to take a picture of this love letter, send it to Seiya, and await further instructions.

No. I'd fail as a secretary if I were to create unwanted trouble for him. Let's just keep it from him for now.



The girl who showed up at the designated meeting point was undoubtedly a beauty.

She was a 2nd year student, the same as Seiya. She had sparkly eyes and semi-long hair. Her waist was in perfect proportion to her slim legs, and while Isuzu didn't know her name, she was sure she'd bumped into her several times in school.

"Erm...Kanie-kun..."

After hesitating for a bit, the girl spoke.

"I am Tsuchida Kanae from class 2-1. I apologize for sending that letter out of the blue, but I've been thinking about this and..."

"Don't worry about it."

Isuzu answered vaguely, fighting her own guilt by reassuring herself that she was doing it for work.

"I considered backing out and running away, but I figured I should at least be responsible and show up..."

"Is that so..."

Isuzu realized she should have acted a little more nervous back there. But it was too late, the atmosphere had gotten to the point where she could only reply with words like "Oh, I see..."

She recalled watching a variety show talking with the topic "Cheating husband's partner confronts wife!" In response to the woman who was giving excuses like "But he was so lonely!" the wife said nothing but "Oh, I see..."

Isuzu wanted to say the same in her current situation. However, she felt a little frustrated that such a woman actually showed up.

Ah, not again. You're his secretary; handle this situation calmly and coolly.

"And..."

"I'm very sorry...!"

Tsuchida Kanae said as she bowed her head in apology.

"I originally wanted to place this letter in Kimura-kun's shoe locker from 2-5, but somehow mistook it and placed it in yours from 2-4. I'm really sorry!"

"What?"

"It's...how do I put it... I basically mistook you for someone else. I'm very sorry..."

Isuzu froze, struggling to comprehend the anti-climactic turn of events that just took place.

"Wait so...you never intended to confess to me...?" "I sincerely apologize for this..."

Tsuchida Kanae's eyes became watery from the guilt.

"You must be angry at me, aren't you? At the very least I hope to apologize to you..."

"No, don't worry about it."

Isuzu's mood brightened up, given that the problem she was

facing had just magically disappeared.

“Huh?”

“Everyone makes mistakes. The fact that you kept to your word instead of hiding in anonymity shows that you have a good heart. You shouldn’t feel guilty about it at all.”

Those words naturally came out just like how Seiya would have said it, despite Isuzu failing really bad at mimicking his tone earlier today.

“D-Does that mean you’ll forgive me?”

“Of course. Tsuchida Kanae, you’re an honest girl.” “...”

Tears began flowing down her cheeks.

“T-Thank you very much! I thought you’d get mad at me for sure... I guess mistaking his locker number wasn’t a bad thing after all.”

“Huh? Anyway, I hope things go well between you and him.” “Thank you. Wait, no. Wait...what should I do...”

Tsuchida Kanae’s words came out strangely. Nonetheless, Isuzu could see Kanae’s face brightening up, to the extent where she thought she was seeing things.

“Are you alright?”

“Y-Yes, I’m fine! Anyway, I’ll take my leave, see you again!” She bowed to Isuzu before running off. Isuzu remained at the

back of the gym, watching her fade into the distance and muttered to herself.

“See you...again?”

Part 4

That evening, Isuzu returned to the sky garden to join Latifa and Seiya, who were chatting over tea. They appeared to be in a cheery mood.

Isuzu had heard that Seiya was able to have a good sleep thanks to her attending school on his behalf. The park would get really busy during weekends and public holidays so Seiya was never able to get enough sleep, explaining why he was always very moody at work.

But then again, Isuzu realized that Seiya was always very gentle to Latifa, so judging the effects of her hard work today through his current mood wouldn't be accurate.

“Oh hello, Isuzu-san.”

Latifa, who was giggling, suddenly turned around and called out to Isuzu. She must have noticed her presence through the footsteps on the stone floor.

“Good evening, Your Highness.”

“Did you know, Isuzu-san? Kanie-san eats his shortcakes so strangely! He makes sure the strawberry doesn't fall off till the very last bite!”

Isuzu glanced at the table and noticed the shortcake on Seiya's plate. He had used the fork to cut it such that a shaky “pillar” was left supporting the strawberry.

“What's with that look? Is it really that strange?”

Seiya asked. "Yes it is!" Latifa giggled.

Despite sounding annoyed, Seiya looked like he was having fun. Isuzu had never seen such a lively expression on his face before.

Making sure not to sound dull, Isuzu spoke.

"Glad to see that you're fine, Your Highness. Kanie-kun, may I?"

"Grab a plate and join in. We'll talk about what happened at school here."

"Please do, I've prepared your portion as well."

Latifa smiled and began pouring a cup of tea for Isuzu. "Understood."

Isuzu took a seat, and began elaborating the things that happened at school over tea. She tried her best to summarize every event, save for the love letter which she completely omitted. Isuzu felt that there was no need to mention it since that matter had already been solved.

"It sounds like there were no problems today." Seiya commented in satisfaction.

"I've have a bad feeling that something would go terribly wrong with this idea the two jokers came up with, but I guess there was no need to worry after all."

"You're right. It also helps that you have no friends."

“Ugh...”

“A-Anyway, it looks like we’ll be able to keep this up for a while longer, though I’d prefer that you go to school yourself...”

Latifa attempted to steer the conversation topic away from Seiya’s social life.

“Do not worry, Your Highness. People wouldn’t even notice him disappearing from school.”

“Just how long are you gonna keep insulting me for...!?”

“That’s not nice, Isuzu-san. You need to pick your words carefully...”

Latifa lectured Isuzu with a gentle tone.

“...In this case, it should be ‘People wouldn’t *mind* him disappearing from school.’”

“...You’re not picking your words appropriately either...”

Latifa continued to tease Seiya subtly. It felt rather one-sided, but Isuzu kept a straight face and stood up.

“Macaron will be in charge of tomorrow’s shift. I still need to brief him on the job, so I’ll take my leave.”

*

“High school, huh. Sure brings back some memories, *ron*.”

Macaron gazed at the distance and muttered. Isuzu had just finished briefing him about tomorrow’s task.

“I certainly did lots of shit back then, *ron*. Heard of Doki-Doki

Melody High in Maple Land? It's known for being a delinquent school."

"I've heard of it. Its students cause a lot of trouble, don't they?"

Doki-Doki Melody High.

Isuzu recalled that it being located in the school district neighboring the one she went to, the Royal Military Academy. Melody used to produce so many gangsters and street punks that it was even referenced in a popular manga, *Fight On, Doki-Doki High!*. Thankfully, the school had become relatively better ever since.

"I used to go to that school, *ron!* Well, before I got expelled, that is."

"I see."

"Had a fight with them punks from another school, you see. Didn't have a choice; our juniors were targeted and got beaten up. Some were even sent to the hospital, *ron.* And so I grabbed a metal pipe and went to take revenge by myself. It sure was one crazy fight, *ron!*"

"Right..."

"Some allies came to my aid and we beat them up in the end, *ron.* But our school caught wind of the incident and expelled me. There were people who sent me out while crying when I left the school for good, *ron.* Those guys were punks, but they have a good heart. I wonder how they're doing now..."

This was essentially a typical old man's reminiscence of the

past, and to a young girl like Isuzu, nothing was more boring than that. Isuzu maintained a dull expression throughout Macaron's tale about his past.

"Anyway, let's just say I have a knack for causing trouble when I was young, *ron*. Not that you'd understand, though."

"Not even a bit." "I see."

Macaron shrugged nonchalantly.

"I had no choice but to enlist into the army after I got expelled, *ron*. Endured some crazy training there..."

"Okay, I'm leaving. Just remember not to cause any trouble tomorrow."

Isuzu interrupted and packed her stuff in preparation leave.

Part 5

The following day, Macaron stood in front of Amagi High in the transformation suit.

There was no need for concern about his job at the park—it was a weekday, so there shouldn't be many customers for him to entertain. Besides, they could always get another suit actor to perform in his stead.

What stood in front of Macaron was an ordinary and peaceful high school of the people of the land. No gangsters, no fights. As such, he would be able to walk around without worrying.

Since Macaron arrived at school early, he quickly left his bag in his classroom and walked out into the hallway, hoping to take a smoke break before classes began. As he searched for a smoking corner, Macaron took out a Marlboro from his pocket and placed it between his lips without lighting it. The students who walked past shot two huge glances at him.

Giving up, Macaron called out to a male student who looked like he knew his stuff.

“Yo. Where's the smoking area?”

“This is a school so, wait...aren't you underage? I've got nothing to do with this, you hear me!?”

The boy distanced himself from Macaron and fled. “Oh right. Almost forgot, *ron*.”

Macaron kept the cigarette while scratching his head. Now that

he thought about it, this was a school, so there was no way there'd be a smoking area.

Macaron recalled his school days, where students in Melody could smoke wherever they wanted—even in class. Smoking was so widespread that cigarette smoke would creep out of classroom windows, and teachers gave up and ignored them while teaching.

This is bad. Doesn't this mean I can't smoke for the whole day?

And as Macaron contemplated to himself, the school bells rang, signaling the beginning of a new period.

The first one up was math. Having no interest in the subject, Macaron spent half the hour reading a pachinko cheat sheet, and the other half sleeping. He received a stern warning from the teacher midway through his nap, but Macaron replied with an “I don't care,” and continued to sleep.

Both the teacher and classmates appeared to be bewildered by his behavior. However, Macaron believed that he was acting normal and shrugged them off, thinking that the students were just weird.

There was a short break between lessons and Macaron had the urge to smoke. However, he had no choice but to suck it up and endure another hour of classes just like the previous.

Oh god, this is so stupid.

Was school really this boring? Gotta give it to Seiya for enduring this every day.

Macaron sat through lessons until English class in the 4th period, when his phone rang. Because he'd forgotten to switch to silent mode, his phone roared out a loud 50 Cent rap throughout the classroom. Furthermore, that particular song had "Fuck!" and "Bitch!" in its lyrics.

The English teacher stared at him with his eyes wide open, appearing to have understood the meaning of the lyrics.

Macaron ignored the teacher and glanced at his phone, only to find that it was a message from his ex-wife. She was demanding her living expenses and arranging the meeting with their daughter.

"*Puff!*" Macaron
swore.

*What an annoying woman. Must she really make such a fuss over a slightly late payment? I even started **actually** paying her since last month. Seriously!*

"Kanie-kun, using phones during classes is prohi—" "Shut up."

Macaron spat out those words in instinct. The pent up frustration from abstinence from tobacco and receiving that message was beginning to show.

"Eh? Kanie-kun, that's not how you speak to your teacher..."

"I said, shut the *puff* up, *ron!* I'm busy now, so just do your damned job and teach!"

Oh crap. I accidentally spoke with my Macaronian accent. Meh, whatever.

The teacher froze, unable to believe what he had just heard. It seemed like Macaron's *mild* language did not sound mild to the teacher, who had probably been pampered by his obedient students.

Nonetheless, this is a high school, so I'd better get my act together and behave like a student.

Macaron shot up, placed both his hands in his pocket and walked to the front.

"What are you trying to do? Resorting to violence!?"

"No, I'm sorry, teacher. May I go to the infirmary? I'm not feeling well."

*

After leaving the classroom, Macaron replied to the message he received on his phone and went to search for a place to smoke. It was then, he was caught by a PE teacher for loitering and was asked to go to the counseling room. Macaron figured that resisting with violence would only cause trouble for Seiya, so he obediently followed.

Throughout the counseling session, Macaron tried to mimic a high school student's manner of speech and replied with "yes...", "not really..." and "I understand..." Eventually, the teacher gave up and spoke.

"...It looks like you don't have any bad records previously, so I'm

letting you go. Don't do this again."

"Righto."

Macaron was released shortly after.

I tried to act like a normal student, yet I'm still getting picked by teachers everywhere. What the heck is wrong with this school?

It was then that Macaron realized that he should be acting like Seiya instead of behaving like a normal school student.

Speaking of which, Seiya wasn't the kind of person to say "Righto."

I'll keep that in mind.

About half of his break between 4th and 5th period had passed. Macaron was hungry, but more importantly, he was dying for some tobacco.

Thankfully for Macaron, the flight of stairs behind the school building did not seem to have anyone nearby. He hid behind it, lit his Marlboro, and took a long, well-deserved puff.

"Ah...great to be alive, ron."

His agitation slowly faded with every puff he took.

Right then, a student carrying a bento walked in. Macaron turned around to find Chuujou Shiina, the part-timer who used to work under him before being assigned as an assistant singer.

Seeing Macaron(Seiya) squatting at the corner and smoking like nobody's business, Shiina jumped.

"Wha... Kanie-senpai...?"

“Yo, Shiina-chan.” “Huh?
Shiina...chan?”

“Almost forgot you study in this school too, *ron*. Anyway, there wasn’t any smoking areas nearby, you see...”

Shiina did not return the laugh that Macaron was making. As if coming in contact with an otherworldly being, Shiina slowly stepped back.

Macaron(Seiya) whipped out another Marlboro stick and offered it to her.

“Want one? I doubt the teachers will come here anyway, *ron*.” “I-I’ll pass!”

Shiina ran off without saying further.

Macaron had intended to tell her about his smoking habit—he didn’t have any intention of hiding it anyway. However, he didn’t have the time to stop her and explain.

Did it really smell that bad? Meh, whatever.

He smoked another stick and stood up. He’d decided to skip 5th period to get some ramen and play some pachinko outside.

As he headed to the bicycle park, Macaron overheard something around the corner of the building.

(...)

It sounded like a boy and a girl quarreling with each other. Because Macaron wasn’t in a rush, he decided to eavesdrop on their exchange.

(...What do you mean by “a mistake”? You’ve always liked me, haven’t you?)

(I know, but... I don’t even understand this myself...)

(You don’t understand? Well, I don’t either. You were supposed to hand me a love letter yesterday, weren’t you?)

(That’s true, but why do you know about this, Kimura-kun?) (Huh? Well...)

(I’ve never told anyone about this apart from Terano-san. Also, I merely mistook your shoe locker with someone else’s. Why are you calling me out here just for something like that?)

(...Terano asked how my relationship with you was going along earlier today, so I wanted to find out what was happening...)

(Terano-san needs to stop poking around so much...) Macaron could hear the female sighing.

(Putting that aside, it’s okay if you have feelings for me, you know? Let’s go out together.)

(But I’m starting to think it wasn’t a mistake after all...)

(What’s up with that? Are you telling me you’ve changed your mind?)

Based on the conversation, Macaron could get the gist of what had happened.

This seems quite messed up. In other words...

It appeared that this Kanae had meant to give a love letter to

Kimura, but failed after mistaking his locker.

And today, Kimura learned about the love letter from Terano (presumably a girl) despite having not received any. Probably having feelings for Kanae himself, he called her out in hopes of sealing the deal.

Then again, there's a saying that a woman's heart can change overnight. Kimura must be furious after learning that she no longer had any feelings for him.

Looks like these two are certainly experiencing the ups and downs of youth. Can't help but envy these people.

The school Macaron studied in—Doki-Doki Melody High—had almost no girls. Isolated corners like this were often used for gang meetings and fights. Finding a place of solitude for a boy and a girl was nigh impossible.

(I'm sorry... I'm beginning to hesitate going out with you.)

(How is that even possible!? You know, I would've said yes without hesitation if you confessed to me!)

(But I really shouldn't date a person I have mixed feelings for...)

(You're saying a wrongly-placed love letter is the cause for this? That's just unfair!)

The boy's rage was becoming overboard, and as a senior, Macaron could no longer sit back and watch without doing anything.

"Now, now. Just calm down, ron."

Macaron stepped in and stopped the two from quarrelling. "What...!"

"K-Kanie-kun...!?"

Looks like this girl knows me. And wait, did I just mess up my accent again? Meh, whatever.

"I overheard your conversation earlier, *ron*. Sounds like the two of you have gotten yourselves into an unfortunate situation."

Macaron paced back and forth around the two who had troubled expressions far worse than what a couple would have when interrupted during a quarrel. Why that was so was a mystery to Macaron.

"Y-You were eavesdropping on us? Such bad manners!"

Kimura exclaimed.

"Calm down. I only happened to pass by, *ron*."

"R...Ron?"

"Don't mind that word. More importantly; young man, you'd best keep it to yourself and endure. The more desperate you are, the harder it is for her to like you. Heed my advice."

"T-That's none of your business! What right do you have to lecture me!?"

"This ain't a lecture, my friend. It's a warning, *ron*." "The hell is 'ron,' anyway?"

"It's nothing."

Macaron grabbed Kimura's shoulder. Recognizing this as a typical act before a fight, Kimura glared daggers back at him. However, after sensing a gangster-like aura from Macaron, Kimura decided not to act.

"Listen, young man. The further you chase a woman, the further they run. The key to getting one is to not be desperate, *ron*. There are many other ladies up for grabs out there, so act as if you'd move on if she continues to play hard to get, *ron*."

"That makes sense, but you're the last person I'd take advice from!"

"Don't be so salty, *ron*. Every man starts out like this. But understand this: Desperate men create nothing but drama. Am I right, young lady?"

"Eh? Yes...wait..."

Kanae, who had been watching the two talk it out, struggled to respond to the sudden prompt by Macaron.

"There you have it, *ron*. In other words, wait until she gets her thoughts together before acting again."

"But...!"

"I understand how you feel, *ron*."

Macaron spoke in a gentle voice.

"You must be worried that she'll go for another man, aren't you? That's not good, *ron*. How do you think you should act when you feel this way?"

“H-How am I supposed to know!? I’m not as handsome as you anyway...”

“You get some soap, *ron*.”

“What?”

“Go to a soapland and *cleanse* your worries away with the ladies, *ron*. The more expensive, the better. You’ll get so much *experience* there that this girl will be nothing to you, *ron*.”

“What are you, a descendent of Kenzo!?” [1]

“But it’s true, isn’t it?”

“It makes sense, but I...”

“Don’t worry, *ron*. I know someone who’s good at this. He’ll introduce you to some good places; they even have girls like Tsuchida-san, if that’s your type. Give me your mail address and I’ll hook you up with him, *ron*.”

I think I said too much, considering that I’ve never been to one in my life. Tricen should know a thing or two about this; I just have to get in touch with him.

“Eh? R-Really? But...”

“Hurry up! Stop being so indecisive, *ron*.” “O-Okay...”

In a daze, Kimura retrieved his phone and began giving Macaron his details. However, he snapped back to reality and shouted.

“W-Wait, what am I doing!?”

“T-The hell is wrong with you, *ron*? You didn’t have to shout!” “Why do I have to listen to advice given from *you*!? It was *your*

locker Tsuchida-san mistook for mine. More importantly, Kanie

Seiya! Of all people, why must *you* barge into our private affair!? You do know she was interested in you before, don’t you?”

Macaron was stunned at Kimura’s words. “W-What? Seiya? Ahem...I mean, me?” “Yeah.”

“Me? And that girl?”

“What do you think?”

“But I wasn’t informed about this, *ron*. Hey, is he telling the truth?”

As Macaron turned to face Kanae, her face turned red and nodded.

“I’m sorry...I didn’t mean to hold feelings for two people at once, but you were really kind to me as a friend yesterday, and I was questioning if we should really just remain as that...”

“Woah, we’ve got a *mitch* in da house, *ron*!”

“Sorry?”

“Never mind.”

By the way, the term *mitch* was a vulgar way of describing a woman in Maple Land, normally used in lines like “You sonuvamitch!” frequently resulting in the person flaring up.

Now, then...

We have this guy here that's glaring daggers, and a lady who's looking at me like I'm her prince charming. Maybe barging in wasn't a good idea...

“But seriously? This Kanie Seiya here isn't worth your attention, I tell you. That arrogant prick fools around with the girls at work, *ron*. I wouldn't recommend dating him if I were you.”

“Whatever, that doesn't change the fact that it's your fault!” “What a way to push the blame, *ron*.”

“S-Shut up! You're just fooling around with me, aren't you!? Have a taste of my fists! ARGH!”

Kimura charged forward, preparing for an attack.

While his punch wasn't very strong, Macaron figured he should be mature and take it on.

Come at me, boy.

The punch came right at his face, but Macaron wasn't the kind who would fall with just that. He stood straight and smirked.

“Not a bad punch, *ron*.” “!?”

“But you didn't put enough strength, *ron*. Come at me again with your full strength!”

“What the...”

Instead of attacking, Kimura stepped back in horror.

“K-Kanie...what’s with that head—I mean neck—of yours?” “?”

Now that Kimura mentioned, Macaron did realize that everything seemed to have rotated about 70 degrees to the right. He glanced at a glass window, only to realize Seiya’s (basically Macaron’s) head was slanted to the right similar to a gunpla figure that had a loose neck socket.

“Oh, whoops.”

He’d forgotten that he was wearing the transformation suit, which could bend at weird angles upon impact. (Speaking of which, where was Macaron’s *real* head at?)

Macaron grabbed his head and looked at the mirror (glass window). Thankfully, the head wasn’t damaged and he was able to place it back in its proper position.

“Sorry about that. Anyway, let’s continue, *ron*.”

When Macaron turned around, Kimura was already dashing away.

“Guess I’m not surprised...”

Watching Kimura’s figure fade into the distance, Macaron sighed.

Macaron had only intended to accept the strikes so he could compliment him in front of Kanae, but he ended up scaring him off instead.

“So, Tsuchida-san.”

“Y-Yes!?”

Kanae, who was standing rooted to the ground, turned and faced Macaron.

“Erm... I-Is your neck okay?”

“Don’t worry about it, I’m just a little more flexible than others, *ron*. I also do acrobatic stunts on TV shows.” “I-I see...”

Her shoulders sank in relief upon hearing Macaron’s excuse. *This girl must have a few screws loose if she actually bought that.* “Anyway, I’m sorry for getting you involved in this...”

“It’s okay, *ron*. Everyone makes mistakes.”

“But...”

“Let me give you some advice, *ron*.”

Macaron whipped out a Marlboro and lighted it. The action seemed so smooth and natural that Kanae did not question it.

“During times like this, it’s best that you talk to an unrelated party, *ron*. You’ll never resolve anything by speaking to that guy. Terano’s your friend, right? Go talk to her at a café or something.”

“R-Right...”

“True story man. I consulted my good ‘ol buddies when I had to get divorce with my ex-wife, *ron*. Though I still had to rely on a lawyer to settle custody...”

“Huh? Divorce? Custody?”

“Shit like this happens the longer you live, *ron*. Forget what I said. See ya.”

Pressing the cigarette against a portable ash tray, Macaron began to walk away.

“W-Wait, Kanie-kun!” “What’s the matter, *ron*?”

Macaron stopped and turned around. “T-Thank you for all your help!”

Tsuchida bowed to Macaron. Feeling uncomfortable at her sudden formality, Macaron waved his hands in denial.

“Cut it out. Besides, you look way more attractive with your head held up high, *ron*.”

“O-Okay!”

The face that sprung up had “love” written all over it.

And as Macaron walked away, he felt that he’d just made a really bad move.

Meh, my job for today is done, and that’s all that matters.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

[1] Kitakata Kenzo is well known for his hardboiled novels about gangsterism.

Part 6

That very evening—

“That’s all that happened, right?”

Isuzu asked Macaron, who was sitting beside Tiramie during the handover session.

“Macaron, you said that the only noteworthy event was the counseling session during the fourth period. Is that really all?”

“Yeah, *ron*.”

“Are you sure? Nothing else?”

In response to her repeated question, Macaron narrowed his eyes at Isuzu.

“What is it?”

“...Like I said, following up with *your* report from yesterday, pretty much nothing happened, *ron*.”

“...”

Anyone could tell that they were hiding something from each other.

“Anyway, I’ll leave it to you tomorrow, *ron*.”

“Leave it to me, *mi*!”

Tiramie said, slapping his pouch. However, it was Tiramie’s “confidence” that worried Isuzu.

“You seem really excited.”

“Of course, *mi*! Reminds me of the old times.”

Tiramie gazed into the distance and spoke. “Ever heard of Waku-Waku Garden High, *mi*?”

“Not too shabby eh, coming from a well-known school, *ron*. But wait, wasn’t there a big fire back then? It was even publicized on the news.”

Isuzu also recalled the news.

“I don’t know much since I was really young, but I remember that incident too.”

“I kinda caused the fire, *mi*.” “...”

“I was in the gardening club back then, *mi*. And in order to prevent the teachers from finding out I was growing marijuana, I burnt the whole garden, *mi*! The flames ignited the chemicals nearby and resulted in a big fire that burnt the whole building. I still feel bad about it, *mi*.”

Tiramie’s smirk showed no signs of guilt.

“Woah, even *I* wouldn’t do something as crazy as that, *ron*. And also, why was the fairy of flowers cultivating dope!?”

“Growing it’s no biggie, *mi*. I heard a *certain* author actually went to the Netherlands to smoke weed! Now *that’s* crazy, *mi*!” [1]

“I guess it’s legal if it’s in the Netherlands. But even then, I am a Royal Guardsman, you know?”

Isuzu commented, having listened to the conversation between

Macaron and Tiramie. Law enforcement was one of the key responsibilities of the Imperial Regiment. Of course, they were also bestowed the power to subdue suspects in the name of justice.

“I already served my suspension, *mi*. Besides, no one was hurt and the old building was renovated, so all’s good, *mi!*”

“Just please don’t burn down Kanie-kun’s school...”

“No frets, *mi!* I’ll be sure to act normal and not stand out.” Tiramie pounded his chest and assured them.

“I really hope so...”

*

Contrary to Isuzu’s worries, Tiramie began his day in school rather peacefully.

Tiramie spend the time during classes fiddling with his smartphone, chatting up random married women. Although none of them entertained his nonsense, he managed to have fun messing with them.

Of course, Tiramie was well aware of the fact that Seiya was an important person in the park. Naturally, Tiramie wouldn’t even *think* about borrowing his appearance to pick up these high school girls.

Never mind, forget what was just said.

Being surrounded by high school girls, Tiramie was already struggling to control his inner urges. After all, he was the guy

whose tastes included girls from the ages of 3 to 99. Naturally, he was at his limit by lunch time.

Mi...mi...

Tiramie sat by the courtyard and looked at the girls passing by.

*That girl's cute. And that babe has a nice ass. Oh, hers too! Heh, I wonder if these girls would attend a special **extra-curricular** lesson with me... I'm sure it'll be puffin' good...*

It was then that Tiramie's phone suddenly vibrated.

<It's about time you started wavering, huh? Just remember that you get a bullet every time you cause trouble (especially with girls). \
(^0^)/>

The message was phrased exactly like how she would speak, save for that inappropriate emoji at the end. Did she even know how to pick emojis?

"Isuzu-chan...you got me."

It appeared that Isuzu knew his character a little too well. He felt a little creeped out, but replied anyway.

<Don't worry, it won't hurt if you behave yourself, *mi*.> *Oh crap. My spelling correction's at it again.*

What Tiramie had originally intended to convey as "I'll behave myself, *mi*," had been corrected to "It won't hurt if you behave yourself, *mi*." And Isuzu's response was almost instant.

<Are you messing with me? Or is that a threat?>

<I made a typo, *mi*. Don't worry, leave the riding to me.>

What the puff! Another correction.

Tiramie wanted to say "Leave it to me," but his phone replaced it with another one of his frequently used phrases.

Once again, Isuzu's reply came instantly.

<Looks like someone wants a bullet in his face. (' ; ω ; `) ブワ ツ >

OOOH GOD, SHE'S ANGRY! Dat emoji tho.

Tiramie desperately typed out a message in an attempt to salvage the situation.

<Wait no, my phone's automatic condom is behind all this, *mi*!> *How did "correction" turn into "condom"?*

<Anyway, this is all a misunderstanding, *mi*. I'll explain everything later when I release it all over you.>

Tiramie's "return" turned into "release it all over you." "Mi...! Mi...! I guess I should just restart my phone..."

And as Tiramie mumbled to himself while holding the power button, he heard a voice calling him.

"Erm, Kanie-kun?"

"Mi!?"

Tiramie shouted in horror and jumped. He turned around to find a girl beside him. She appeared to be a 2nd year, but Tiramie did not recall her being in Seiya's class.

The girl was really pretty, without doubt. Tiramie deduced her 3 sizes to be 80-60-83 with ease.

I'd have no complaints if all women were like this.

“W-What’s the matter?”

Having just snapped out of the mail conversation with Isuzu, Tiramie asked.

The girl was originally confused at Tiramie’s (Seiya’s) strange behaviour, but regained her composure and spoke.

“I’m sorry about yesterday. You know, about his temper and everything. I was wondering if I could speak with you...”

“Oh sure, I don’t mind.”

Tiramie cleared his throat and said. His tone did not resemble Seiya’s one bit, but he figured she wouldn’t question it.

“May I join you?” “Yeah, be my guest.”

Tiramie was sitting on a bench by a flower patch. He shifted to the side, making space for the girl.

“So, you are...”

“Yes?”

“What’s your name again?”

The girl’s expression turned south upon hearing what Tiramie just said.

“It’s Tsuchida Kanae. Have you forgotten it already?”

Guess I didn't have a choice. I just need to find a way to recover from this.

“You know there’s no way I could ever forget your name, don’t you?”

Normally, Tiramie would approach her with an adorable expression, but given that he was taking Seiya’s form, he decided to do it the “host club” way.

“I simply love the sound of your name.” “Eh?”

“Hey, say it once more. What’s your name again?” “T-Tsuchida Kanae...”

“Lovely. I’ll never get tired of your voice.”

Tiramie whispered those words into her ears, and Kanae’s face reddened.

“D-Don’t tease me like that.”

“I’m sorry, but there’s no way I can control my desire to tease such a cute girl like you.”

“Erm...”

“There’s too many people around here. Let’s go to some place quieter.”

Tiramie placed both hands on Kanae’s shoulders causing her to flinch a little before nodding timidly.

YES!

For someone who has no friends, this Seiya's quite a chick magnet. Guess I oughta fulfil my responsibilities and satisfy all of this girl's desires!

Tiramie grabbed her hand and started walking. It was then that Kanae asked.

“Erm...where are we going?”

“Heh heh...some place where I can...tease you all I like.”

“Eh!? B-But...”

“Don't be afraid. I'll take the lead, *mi*.” “M-Mi?”

“Sorry, I meant 'I'll take the lead.'” “O-Okay...”

Looks like Seiya's gotten himself one hell of a mitch. Guess I need to work harder too!

But now that I think of it, where would be a good place to bring her to? The gym and infirmary are probably locked... But wait—

Tiramie recalled that the roof was off-bounds to students. This meant that there shouldn't be anybody climbing up the flight of stairs leading up to it. That area was also being used as a storage for unused equipment, after all.

He would be able to enjoy a *puffing good time* with her undisturbed.

“Kanie-kun...”

“Yeah?”

“You seem like a completely different person from yesterday...I’m...”

“You’re nervous, aren’t you?”

Kanae nodded.

Right, yesterday was that old man Macaron; he probably spewed lots of his lame-ass stories.

“That was yesterday, and today is today, *mi*. I don’t see the problem, *mi*.”

“But you suddenly became so aggressive and...that’s just not like you...”

“Heh heh. Don’t you wanna see what I’m *really* like?” “Eh...?”

“Don’t worry so much and just follow me. I’ll show you something amazing, *mi*.”

Tiramie placed his hand behind her back, causing her to stiffen before melting in his arms. He then proceeded to bring the cute girl up the stairs.

Things are getting REALLY hot here! Come to think of it, this is my first time ever achieving something like this. I could get used to this handsome transformation suit!

However, as they approached the top floor, they found a female student sitting at the door to the rooftop.

“K-Kanie-senpai...?”

The girl who was eating by herself was Chuujou Shiina. The newcomer who only just started work in April looked traumatized upon seeing Tiramie (Seiya) accompanying a girl up the stairs.

“Oh, hey Shiina-chan.”

“L-Looks like you came to school today as well... More importantly, who is she?”

“Heh, you didn’t have to ask, *mi*. We’re gonna have some fun together, so could you go someplace else?”

“K-Kanie-kun...”

Tiramie blew on Kanae’s ears gently, causing her legs to weaken.

“Ah...”

“You get what I mean, *mi*. Don’t worry, we can do it together next time.”

Hearing that, Shiina threw her lunch box at Tiramie (Seiya) and shouted.

“T-That’s just immoral. Utterly disgraceful!”

“*Mi!*?”

As Shiina stormed down the stairs, Tiramie picked off the grains of rice that were stuck to his shirt and mumbled to himself.

“What a strange reaction, *mi*. Normally she’d just apologize repeatedly.”

“Kanie-kun... Who was that girl we met just now?”

The tone of Kanae’s voice was cold, completely different from before.

“Hmm? Don’t worry about her, *mi*. Now we have a quiet place for just the two of us!”

“I still don’t understand why you have to end your sentences with ‘mi.’”

“Just ignore that for now. Are you ready? Let me take you to heaven, *mi!*”

Tiramie lunged forward with both arms outstretched. However, Kanae pushed away the face that was quickly approaching her.

“More importantly, what kind of relationship do you have with that girl?”

“She’s just a junior at my workplace. No need for concern.”

“Yes, there is. Wasn’t she angry at you? Or perhaps you’re two-timing? I’m not interested in getting myself involved in this.”

“You’re misunderstanding, *mi!* You’re the only person I’ve set my eyes to. Just close your eyes. See that faint light? That’s me. Just relax and leave everything to me...”

“Eh...? But...”

Right then, Tiramie’s phone vibrated. When he whipped it out to see the message, Kanae took the chance and snatched it from his hand.

“Let me see.”

“Hey!”

Tiramie had set his phone to display the first few lines of the message on the lock screen.

<Sento Isuzu: Looks like we have some *really* important things to discuss tonight. You’d better be prepared. (*’

`*) >

Just what on earth is up with that emoji!?!?

“‘Tonight’? Seriously?”

“She’s talking about work....”

“And the sender is...Sento Isuzu? So it wasn’t just Shiina, but her as well?”

“Yeah... It’s complicated, *mi*.” *Puff! Shit just got real.*

“It looks like I misjudged you. And here I was, thinking you were an honest guy...”

“But I *am* honest, *mi*! It’s all just a misunderstanding!”

“I guess you’re just a womanizer after all. I have no interest in fooling around with people like you.”

“I’m not fooling around! I’m serious about being with you!” “Then why don’t you try saying my name again?”

“Ugh...”

Who could have known that she’d actually take the conversation they had seriously?

This is why we can’t ever let our guard down when dealing with

women!

...So did her name start with a "tsu"? Or was it a "chi"? Her given name was... "Hanae"? "Honaе"? The middle character was definitely a "na", though..."

"Of course I remember your name, *mi*! It's Tsu...tsu..." "Tsu?"

Guess it didn't start with "tsu" after all, so it must be "chi"!

"It's Chitsuda Kaname, isn't it?"

"It's Tsuchida Kanae... I'm leaving..."

"W-Wait a second, *mi*! Let's just talk this out; we can clear up all the misunderstandings if we talk face-to-face!"

"You're the worst! Just stop it already!"

Kanae pushed Tiramie aside and ran down the stairs. Even *he* didn't have the guts to stop her from leaving. Tiramie fell to his knees and began to tear up. "Tch! How did it take a turn like this?!!"

Kanie Seiya would have been the one to cry after hearing about Tiramie's stupidity. Ignoring that thought, Tiramie continued to swear at his bad luck.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

[1]: Referring to Haruki Murakami.

Part 7

That evening after closing hours at the park——— “I’m Handing over these documents, is that all?” Isuzu asked.

Tiramie was on today’s substitute duty, and it was Moffle’s turn to sit in for tomorrow.

“Yup, that’s about it mii-.”

Tiramie was in an awfully haggard state. The noon mail incident, explaining the suspicious smartphone

conversation, all of those appeared to be the reasons which have worn Tiramie out. *’’If I exclude that

mail trouble then nothing particularly significant happened..... maybe. Perhaps?’’ *

“Yeah..... sort of.....”

Tiramie’s response was rather crisp, but since Isuzu herself could tend to be underhanded at times, she

did not pursue the matter further.

“Well, whatever. These few days, Kanie-kun’s health condition has been favourable thanks to an ample

amount of rest. His spirits are good too, and his abusive tongue has quite abated. I could really go on with

things this way.”

In fact, there is more vigour in Seiya’s recent work performance, and his treatment towards his

subordinates was rather mild in itself. His habitual brooding over the atmosphere was not present either,

outside of enjoying his chat with Latifa during the night. Alleviating stress and fatigue in humans could

surprisingly change them even to such lengths. That was quite splendid.

“So, it will be Lord Moffle’s turn tomorrow. But will you be alright?”

“Leave it to me fumo.”

Moffle struck out his chest and looked into the distance.

“Say, high school ehh..... Just about everything is nostalgic fumo. For what it’s worth, I’m an alumnus of

Fuwa Fuwa National Defence high school.”

Fuwa Fuwa National Defence high school; Mapleland’s well-known elite school under the military’s direct supervision.

Isuzu once attended the Imperial Guards Infancy School which is located beside the floating middle

school section. It is one of the main career paths, also known as “Fuwa High”.

Isuzu was a highflyer from the fact that she had skipped grades in the Imperial Guards Military Academy she attended.

Nonetheless, she had never been to Fuwa High———

“Every day was tough fumo. A full boarding system. With senpai’s gruelling regimentation, you’ll be

complete. We rise at 5.30 in the morning and then If the bed-making was sloppy, it was met with a choke

full of fists fumo.[1]"

The reminiscent talk had once again begun..... Isuzu then started backing away.

"Is that so mii-? I might've came across Moffle when I left the park, though I'm not really sure mii-."

"You know, about being in the military fumo? I certainly met Macaron during those days. I was a

commissioned officer, he was a non-commissioned one. At that time during "Operation Sweet Storm", he,

the sniper..... Nah, forget it. Anyway, Macaron had to speak respectfully to me. It was funny, a damn

masterpiece. Till this day, I still think of it fumo."

It was her first time hearing that story. So Isuzu wanted to lis-ten in more, but Tiramie immediately changed

the direction of the conversation to his high school life.

"Mii-. What... is that what you call enjoyable in high school?" "No, not at all. Don't quite remember but it was tiresome fumo. A shared liability to be beaten, having a hard time as a dunce.

Very grey three years fumo."

"Hmm..... what about girls? Anything mii-?"

"None fumo. There were never any to begin with. But something fun huh..... there's one. It was that day when I got permission to go out to buy and eat sweets

fumo."

“Wasted youth mii-.”

“Moffu..... but hey, isn’t that a part of the “O Wonderful Youth” drama? Being riddled with futility. The drab of everyday.

Depression and gloom is youth, I think fumo.” “Just like that mii-?”

“Just like that fumo.”

With a strange verdict and a suspicious look, Moffle folded his arms and nodded his head.

Clearing her throat, Isuzu slammed a bundle of documents against the desk.

“Putting aside this philosophical topic..... If there are no other problems for this one day, we’ll hereon

continue to request the other casts to double as the substitute. We’re depending on you, Lord Moffle.”

“So I say, leave it to me fumo.”

‘Hmph’, Moffle snorted.

“I’m going to school tomorrow as well.” “Do as you please fumo.”

The next day———

As expected, Moffle handled the Kanie Seiya substitute role flawlessly.

Meaning, he was clad in an aura that made it difficult for any-one to talk to him as if he lives on the pretext

that he

doesn’t have any friends. Without Macaron’s degree of nicotine addiction, he is abstaining from tobacco

until after school. A few classes were boring, but he would on a whim show interest in watching some

university career options programme.

In any case, singing out ;“Fuwa Fuwa high is unbreakable FUWA! Never will our spirits waver!” and so

forth during 10km runs every morning back when he was at school, such an ordinary high school is really

carefree in comparison.

(Moffu. Though.....) It’s strange.

Observing the students, one would notice that they have an exceedingly strict mood around them.

Not exactly the “students”, but more like the girls.

There are whispering and murmuring among the girl groups, as far as the visible surroundings go.

Drawing some attention, the girls pulled back a little like they were retreating. Just by passing by, a chilly

gaze came from somewhere among the girls. (Uh huh. Strange indeed fumo.)

This harsh treatment, could it just be that the position of a character of solitude was not able to be

established?

During the classroom movement at 3rd period, a girl from the neighbouring class— an indeed strongwilled

type of lady was whispering audibly enough to be heard from here.

“” What nerve. After doing such a thing, how can he still nonchalantly come to school.....””

As there weren't many other students within earshot, there seems to be no doubt that they are pointing out at me(Seiya).

Things were all good so far, but due to the current circumstances, I'd want to enquire.

Moffle approached that female student. “Err, excuse me but.....”

“Wh, what is it.....?”

“Just now, you said ‘doing such a thing’. Did you refer to me? If it's possible, I wish to ascertain the details.”

Rather naturally, Kanie Seiya would like to try finding out. But the female student seemed to have raised her guard, as her body stiffened a little.

“I, I don't know. Why don't you ask Tsuchida-san?” “Tsuchida? Who?”

“Seriously, acting dumb now? You really are the worst.”

Speaking like she's spitting in disgust, the student left in a quick pace with her friends.

“HmMMM.....”

Folding his arms, Moffle started to ponder.

The worst, huh. That's none other than Kanie Seiya's problems.

I don't know how that youngster presents himself at school, so with the current status quo, I'd better sit out of this.

Seiya might've done something, I guess? No way, Seiya is unexpectedly a serious fellow. At the least,

he's not "the worst" kind of guy.

4th period ended and then it was lunch break. Immediately, Moffle decided to call out Isuzu to the rear of the school building for a consultation.

"As I've said, it's complicated, there's that mood where I'm looked at with harsh eyes but..... I've got

no idea, did something happen fumo?" "Err. That. Well....."

Isuzu's reply was inarticulate.

"What kind of reply is that? Speak up fumo. If not, it'll be impossible for me to do my job."

"....."

"Ahh, you're of no help at all fumo. I'm calling Seiya fumo. At this rate, nothing will be settled—"

"Hold on."

As Moffle took out his smartphone, Isuzu wanted to say something but hesitated.

".....Actually."

"Moffu. Actually?"

“.....Kanie-kun is out of the loop about this. I was in charge of this substitution plan from the

beginning, and matters have become quite complicated—”

Isuzu explained.

The love letter Isuzu received on the first day.

The next day, Macaron was in charge, and Tiramie the following. Something's bound to have happened, I

think.

And thus today, Isuzu heard bad gossips about Seiya when she came to school.

“I don't know the details. Anyway, you say this Tsuchida, you seem to have given this child a coldhearted

treatment. I heard this from you, but the points of view are very much different.

What Isuzu heard was in no doubt different.

Tsuchida Kanae was pushed down. Tsuchida Kanae was all slimy and slippery as she was tentacle raped.

Tsuchida Kanae was in a state of double peace[2] as she was drug dependent.

Tsuchida Kanae was in bliss during the end of her pregnancy when her child's ear was placed against her

stomach. This and that.

“In any case, those are some outrageous behaviours.”

“I don't comprehend how a pregnancy ends in only a day by whatever means but..... anyway this

isn't an ordinary case fumo.”

“Macaron, well.....he’s, as a whole, a calm person. The main cause is probably Tiramie.”

“That damned dog! Next time I see him; I’ll force feed him onions fumo!”

“I too, share some responsibility, as I did not report the Tsuchida Kanae case.....”

“Moffu! Damn right, Isuzu didn’t fumo. Why the heck not—?”

“I was careless.”

“Are things like love letters such rare events? Whatever the hell it may be—”

“C-a-r-e-l-e-s-s-.”

As she dug her hand into her skirt and drew her eyes closer to threaten, Muffle’s fortitude wavered and he did not question any further.

“C, come now, it’d be alright fumo. That aside, I can’t think of any counter-measures. Ohh well, from

tomorrow onwards this would no longer be a place Seiya can fit into fumo.”

“So far, it had never been a place he fitted in in the first place, probably..... I wonder if he’ll be fine.”

Nonchalantly speaking such cruel things. “Do you actually feel responsible fumo?”

“Naturally. Especially so, concerning that Kanie-kun’s rest these few days was a result of a little

negligence. Stopping by to have tea with Her Highness at night.....
for whatever reason, this mood is

about as good as it is." "Oi"

"Anyhow, Lord Moffle, about the direction of this chat about
Kanie-kun's condition, it strangely irritates

me. This can't be helped after all, huh??" "You
sure as hell lack remorse fumo."

".....you might be upset with being at a loss from thinking for
counter measures."

She was talking with her usual deadpan expression.

If she was a little more upset and depressed, then what if she had
shown a different kind of behavior than

usual. Even upto the point of gentle weeping.....but no,
Sento Isuzu was this kind of girl since the beginning.

So once again, Isuzu directly contacted this Tsuchida girl to confirm all
the facts, as well as finding

whatever means necessary to apologise.

Just as Moffle seemed about ready to go with her suggestion.
"Kanie-kun!? So that's where you've been, huh!?"

Several female students came to the rear of the school building, the
one in the middle was the one yelling

at him.

Coming along were four people.

//part?

All of them were faces unfamiliar to Moffle. The one who yelled was a seemingly strongwilled girl with semi-long hair.

(That's Terano-san of year 2 class 5. The leader of one of the many girl groups. The one hesitating behind

her is the crux of the problem, Tsuchida Kanae. The rest are Terano's followers, I suppose.)

Isuzu whispered to Moffle.

(Thank you very much for that wonderful explanation. Or rather, we're screwed, aren't we fumo.....?)

(Seems like it.....)

Isuzu supplemented accordingly. The names of the two others with Terano and Tsuchida were Yamamoto

and Sasaki. They had relatively mob-like appearances but it was easy to remember. Moffle however, was

not very good at remembering names, so he'd already forgotten them since three seconds ago.

Anyway, the ones seizing the initiative in this situation was Terano and the girls.

Standing in front of Moffle(Seiya), Terano spoke.

"Remember me? During first year, we were in the same class, Terano Mutsumi."

"A.... ahh, yeah. Of course." "As expected, you lied."

"?"

"Because I was in a different class."

“Ughh.....”

After all, it’s just a light jab. This woman is belligerent with full power.

“ Dealing with you, I’m fine with whatever since I don’t personally know you. But still, this is totally not

okay. You, you’ve hurt Tsuchida-san’s feelings, didn’t you?”

“Err-. Moffu. That’s..... the cause of the procedural impediments, how should I put it.....”

“Well haven’t I heard it all? What’re your intentions? Huh?”

“Err. Moffu. Well, how should I put it? Do you think you could withhold the comments until the issue is

properly
examined.....”

“Don’t screw with me!”

The atmosphere was stinging and quivering. What a powerful voice it was. Though Moffle was startled,

even the surrounding girls had their spine taut and breaths suppressed.

“Tsuchida-san was in an unpleasant position, you know!? What I’m saying is, you’re trying to do these

odious things for the fun of it.....! I can’t believe this! She was serious! And you mean to deceive this

girl!?”

“This girl” refers to Isuzu, it seems. She seemed to be treated like Kanie Seiya’s lover ‘A’. For now,

without uttering a single word, Isuzu planned to first carefully observe the situation.

“Right..... She’s a colleague at work———”

“Meaning, someone you got along well with in this work of yours?”

“No, not particularly.”

“So you’re talking your way out of this, huh? Really, the worst.

Guys, I think you’ve seriously been manipulated. What about Kimura-kun, taking a day off resting in bed

since he was in shock or so?” “Ki, Kimura.....?”

Again, an unfamiliar name came up. Give me a break! Then, Tsuchida Kanae timidly interjected.

“Te, Terano-san.....I, I didn’t mind it too much. But, it’d be quite bad if Kanie-kun was to be

completely blamed.....”

“Haa!? Tsuchida-san, what’s going on!? Wasn’t this bloke cruel to you yesterday? We’re all putting our

best efforts to deal with this guy’s irresponsibility! Moreover, that girl, this Shiina person too said that.

He’s three-timing! Such a man is unforgivable, like, totally!”

As Terano continued rambling, the two remaining persons (whose names were already forgotten) went

“uh huh uh huh”, nodding in agreement. “Err..... Shiina?”

“Yeah, the first year Chuujou Shiina! Whom I have properly inquired!”

“Hmm, Shiina huh.....”

That damned Tiramie. If he dares lay a hand on Shiina, I’ll take it upon myself to solicitously mince him in

the most ardent fashion fumo (on behalf of her father, kind of sense).
.....But, thinking about it, during

that night-out at Savage last week, Shiina had only so much to talk about with that guy. There was indeed a

minimum amount of restrain in Tiramie. Moreover, apart from refraining to debut as the park’s singer, this

girl wouldn’t do such a thing. In other words, it’s hard to believe that he’d actually do something to

Shiina.....

“So, is this some sort of mistake?”

“Definitely not, don’t you think!? I heard it from Tsuchida-san, you know. Trying to take Tsuchida-san to a

deserted place, taming and colluding with Chuujou Shiina, intending to do all sort of cruel things!”

“I... I didn’t say such things.”

“Tsuchida-san, k-k-keep quiet! In summary, it’s that sort of thing, right!?”

Terano flatly denied the flustered Tsuchida. (Moffu.....)

Somehow, Muffle already grasped the relationship between the people in that group.

The leader being Terano with those two as her followers. And Tsuchida was in a delicate position.

Terano got furious after hearing Tsuchida's testimony and her speech grew more and more exaggerated.

Moreover, addressing each other with "-san"

despite being equals, the relationship between Terano and Tsuchida seemed unexpectedly shallow.

Since Tsuchida was not very intimate with her, Terano was just complaining incessantly rather than

displaying her leadership.

It was possible that she was just taking advantage of this situation.

(Well, just because it doesn't seem like either of them were trying to take advantage but.....)

As thoughts ran in my mind, as if to clarify, Tsuchida said.

"I... I ran away in the middle of it, at that time, Kanie-kun was somewhat odd....."

"So much for wrong assumptions ,isn't it!? Moreover, getting vulgar mails from this Sento woman?

Probably going to indulge in all sorts of indecent acts tonight———."

"I was not joking."

Being unable to withstand it any longer, Isuzu said.

"Swearing upon the Goddess Libra, I do not have such relations with Kanie-kun. If you heard such talk

from Tsuchida here, then this girl has been lying." Terano ridiculed Isuzu's stifling voice.

“Huuuuuh? Well, aren’t you an idiot? Do you think i could simply believe what Kanie-kun’s woman just

said? I mean, the hell is this Libra you talk about?”

“In that case, you could use a bit of enlightenment. May Libra’s wrath guide you.....”

Moffle held her back as Isuzu was about to draw her musket. “Stop!”

“But, General.”

“I said stop fumo.”

Isuzu with her hand drawn from her skirt was stopped by Mof-fle (Seiya). It was a scene with only words

and without any sense of unease. It seemed to have further increased Terano and co.’s confusion

“A.....anyway, the point is you’ve trampled all over her sincerity! So apologise!”

“I am very sorry (fumo).”

Moffle promptly bowed his head. Seiya’s figure displayed no resistance at all.

“There’s barely any sincerity in that right!? Get on your knees!” “Yes. At once (fumo).”

Moffle promptly got on his knees. Seiya’s figure, like before, showed no resistance.

“Her feelings were dishonoured; deeply hurt, you know!? Never approach Tsuchida-san again!”

“Yes, I won’t(fumo).”

He said while on his hands and knees, bowing his head down.

Seiya's figure had not one bit of resistance. Thank goodness. That's enough.

When madly in love, sincerity or whatever, one's feelings would blow up all at once like explosives.

There, suffering from the insults.

"Your reflections seem to be only on the surface, I bet. Doing foolish things when in love!? I will not be deceived!"

Terano stood before him, then stepped on the back of his head with a little force. On her tiptoe, bringing

up a cloud of dust, covering the back of the head of the transformation suit.

From Seiya's appearance, it looked like he was gradually reaching his boiling point.

".....To get excited from this kind of thing, you skirt chaser!"

"Arrgh"

Brushing off her leg whilst getting up, he shouted at Terano who fell over due to his sudden actions.

"Shut your damn trap and listen up. Feelings, sincerity?.....Don't use such cheap words fumo!..... Ha!

Love!? Romance!? You guys are no different from brats. The hell do you understand about love?! Don't

bloody make me laugh fumo!"

"General, calm down"

"Shut the heeeell up———! Let me finish fumo!"

This time, Isuzu was put in check. Moffle swung the dumbstruck Terano's hand, hitting her.

“A little poking around to prolong your make-believe friendship, to get hurt feelings, to hurt someone's

feelings..... are you guys, making light of human lives fumo!? Something like 'getting angry for the

sake of Tsuchida-san is sooo cooooollll~::~~!!', is what you're thinking eh!? B-U-L-L-S-H-I-T-!!!!!!”

The nearby shrubs were shredded in threes by a hollow slash from Moffle's arms as he yelled.

Such a technique was never used before, but some force had gone along with it. Well, it is quite normal

for anyone to get angry occasionally.

“What you guys are doing after all, is pretend-love fumo!” “Jus.....”

“The pains of true love, the hardships— do you really understand those? Hell no, damn right you don't!

For

example..... a woman whom I was in love with for over 10 years was wedded to a man whom I really hated!! Do you understand that kind of feeling!? I was writhing

in pain!

Suffering to the end! And yet, I had no choice but to bear with it! It was heartbreaking, but I didn't say a

word to anyone!

Moreover, i had to put up with it for a further 10-odd years!

And from the woman I loved, I had to 'ask this girl' about that man's moods, but would you understand it

even a little!? Hell, no, not a bloody chance fumo!"

When the incidence of anger had reversed and with his continued yammering, Terano and co. went blank.

"Are you perhaps referring to Her Highness.....?"
Upon hearing Isuzu's words, Mofle was taken aback. "S, shut up! It's just an example fumo, an example!"

Somehow, I don't know how the situation had come to this development. Anyway, by all means, I'm sorry

but never am I going along with such a farce again.

"Damn skirt chasing kids! If Seiya wants to play the ass, I'd just let him do as he pleases! Well, he'd just

do it anyway! Anyway, that much is predicted fumo! You shits wouldn't marry a decent man! I Assure you!

In about 20 years down the road, you'll be remembering these words as you are reflecting upon those

bitter feelings!"

Excessive abusive remarks were said. Furthermore, completely forgetting to maintain their act, the group

of girls were either baffled or angry. Whispering among themselves words like

"what's with this guy" and "Hey we're seriously buying that.....".
At the very least, there wasn't the

slightest indication of contemplation or sympathy.

"We're screwed.....", in a voice filled with sorrow, Isuzu murmured as she stood at the back. Now, any

attempt to recover Seiya's reputation in school was hopeless.

"That so..... well whatever. Anyway, you are just scum after all, that I know very well."

As Terano and girls exchanged looks of astoundment, indicating an intention to leave, a lone, new, male student, appeared in the place.

"Hey———, excuse me! Could you please hold on for a bit?"

It was a 2nd year male whom Moffle doesn't know. Isuzu seemed to have some idea on who he was, but doesn't actually know the person.

"Kimura-kun? Weren't you taking the day off?"
Terano asked.

That young man— this Kimura guy had possibly ran over.

Coming to Moffle(Seiya)'s side, leaning over with his shoulders widely moving up and down.

"Nah..... Thinking about it, it shouldn't have become this complicated..... I changed my mind and came to school

some time ago. So I can speak directly to you guys....."

Adjusting his breath, Kimura faced everyone, put his hands together and deeply bowed his head.

"Guys, I'm sorry!!"

"Hold it. Why is Kimura-kun apologising?"

"Because Kanie.....Kanie. He was causing this wreck for my sake!"

"Ehh?"

“This confusing issue; approaching girls and doing detestable actions..... So that Tsuchida-san would

hate him, and things would go back to how it was before. Say, isn't it that right, Kanie?”

With the sudden prompting, Moffle was dumbfounded for a brief moment.

“Fumo? Err.....” “Isn't that right, Kanie?”

“Ahh..... yeah. Well.....”

“I'm really sorry. Things had turned out quite unexpectedly.....”

“The night before last, I consulted Kanie. Somehow, Tsuchida-san's feelings had sort of changed. What

was the best I could do.....I asked. And then Kanie went 'in that case, what if I made her hate me.

Simple enough.' Like that. Of course it was absurd. Doing as such, what kind of heinous rumours would

emerge..... So, Terano?”

Taking a glance at Kimura, Terano awkwardly averted her eyes.

Just from there, Moffle had a rough idea of the source of the school-wide rumours.

“On second thought, Such a method to depend on kanie is expectedly not cool. Even putting tsuchida in a

shameful position, making people look at her wretchedly.

So I decided to forget about all that. And

in order to become a man suitable for Tsuchida-san, I'll be do-ing my very best from here on! And so,

Terano.....” “Yy,
yeah.....”

“I hope we can amicably put a close to this matter. I’ve really imposed
too much trouble on you

guys.....”

For reasons unknown, Kimura’s words carried some strange weight.

He came to this place for the sake of conveying his request, when
even Terano is unaware of the plan and

saving

Tsuchida’s honour. Surely, to suddenly appear out of the blue and
bring the issue to a conclusion would

result in this mood.

“In that case, I hope things will go well between Kimura-kun and
Tsuchida-san, that’s all I have.....”

“Many thanks. What’d you say Tsuchida-san?”

“Ehh? Err.....yeah. Then I too.....hope it’ll be fine with
Kimura-kun.”

Reaching an agreement with the concerned parties, Kimura,
Moffle(Seiya) and Isuzu bowed down their
heads in apology.

“Then that would be all. Kanie, Sento. About you guys being work
colleagues, I apologize for the weird

misunderstanding!”

“I came back in a hurry, but as I thought, my physical condition is a
little bad” Kimura told those present

and departed from the back of the school building.

A little while after getting away, moving up the emergency stairwell, stealthily taking a peek.

Though baffled by the abrupt closure of issues, Terano's girl group, "Kanie Seiya" and Sento Isuzu

respectively exchanged superficial apologies, then dispersed to prepare for 5th period.

"My, my. With this, things are settled for now, I guess.....?" The one muttering was a lone girl waiting in that place— as Chuujou Shiina let out a groan.

"Yeeeaahh. Shiina couldn't really say anything. But anyway..... senpai's acting was nicely done." "Hmph, you can say I have some experience."

While saying that, in order to take off the "Kimura" mask, he had the head entirely removed. And

emerging from within, was none other than Kanie Seiya.

Seiya took off the transformation suit and stared at the Kimura imitation mask in discomfort.

"It was an improvised preparation, well it's a secret that it's completed. Seriously, those guys from the

Diggerry clan have a hell of a skill.

Grasping the situation this morning, Seiya placed an order which took only two hours. Not a full-body one

though but just the modelling of the head. That said, the speed is certainly astounding. It was fortunate that

the materials were about sufficient thanks to it being just the head.

“Magic transformation suit.....was it? From the explanation, I’ve a full understanding of senpai’s eccentric behaviour the last few days. But a little recently, I’ve more or less gotten used to these antics, rather than being surprised.....”

“I say, the know-hows of adaptability dwells within your very being, Chuujou.”

Seiya went into a sadistic snicker, Shiina averted her gaze. “D, don’t make fun of me, please.....”

“In any case, you’ve saved me. I’ll want to raise your hourly wages but.....well, eventually. I’ll give

you a treat afterwards, so be patient.” “Right.....”

An indifferent reply. Casually wanting to raise the hourly wage although it’s impossible. Once it’s raised,

reduction is not very simple. That is precisely why it’s not a stingy move.

It was late last night that Seiya noticed the anomaly.

It was just a complete coincidence. It was because Seiya wanted to make 2, 3 confirmations regarding

Chuujou Shiina’s CD

recording schedule, he gave her a call. Since Shiina’s response was bit unnatural, she was subjected under Seiya’s inquisition.

And thus, he ended up hearing about himself allegedly “flirting with some unknown 2nd year girl” that day

in school.

They strangled Tiramie, that day's person in charge, as he was pressed for answers just as he was about

to return. Listening to Macaron's tales who was in charge yesterday, their little escapades were then

brought to light. He also considered questioning Isuzu, but that, he could not bring himself to do.

The problems from her role as the substitute could be roughly imagined.

Well then, what a bother.

The next day, I(or should I say, Moffle) would likely be getting a flaming from Terano's clique. It's not

hard to imagine my deteriorating position within school. But as for friends, I've certainly got none, so not

likely would my comfort in school get any worse———

Thus, a ploy was conceived.

Ambush Kimura during his early morning commute to school, and "respectfully request his cooperation".

Specifically, "what's the most embarrassing moment of your life, thus far?" to enquire, then use the usual

magical shenanigan to read his thoughts. Deepest apologies, for we got no time to spare for a leisurely

persuasion.

Thanks to that, Kimura having taken several tens of

photographs, he so "humbly agreed" to take a day off from school.

Upon receiving the photographs, the Diggerry clan, who were on standby, immediately kick-started the

production of the Kimura costume. After a mere few hours, the costume was delivered, somehow, just in time for lunch break.

In those circumstances, asking for some assistance from Shi-ina, “it seems that everyone has gathered at the back of the school building”, she reported, then somehow just barely rushing there in time.

And as for the crisis, all is well, for the time being. “But, Kanie-senpai.....”

Shiina mumbled with a little hesitation.

“Why were Moffle-san and Isuzu-senpai doing this in secrecy?”

Shiina thought that once Terano and friends were gone, you would’ve went ‘BAA!’, taking off the costume and had been relentlessly mad.” “Thought of that too, but.....” Seiya gave a troubled expression.

Of course he was angry at their recklessness with the substitute plan. It’s other people’s affairs, having

such selfish behaviour, at least considered to be. However, to watch Moffle and co do this and that in

front of the girl group, it was a wonder that he was not furious. But instead, he had an “apologetic” feeling.

“Well.....to have expressly moved to act as my substitute, it’ll be unreasonable to be angry don’t you think?”

Not as an official stance, but from their true feelings.

Thereupon, Shiina was struck in awe and rendered speechless, making an expression of sorrow yet amusement.

“Senpai. That’s risky.” “?”

“Since I was told to be silent, I’ll not speak of it. However, some-day Moffle-san and the rest would want to know the rest.”

What’s this elementary schooler saying? Did she even listen to me?

“Oi, well then you’d best stay silent. You hear me?”

“But, but, this is an internal secret after all. Macaron-san and Tiramie-san, and even everyone in the Diggerry clan are aware of it.”

“Uh huh..... Surely it is only a matter of time. But, in a way, I don’t want them to owe me any favours. Sento and Moffle in particular.”

“Yes. Shiina’s lips are sealed. Do not worry.”

“Really? Can I trust you?”

“Yes.....!”

Why would this girl show that sort of glad-looking face?

Seiya wanted to peek into her mind as usual with magic, but opted to take a pass as “The rules of grenades”[3] will always apply.

That night———

Isuzu came to the sky garden to hand things over. And just like the past few days, Seiya and Latifa were

leisurely chatting away. “Pardon me, Princess”

“Ahh, Isuzu-san. Come and listen, it’s so amusing.”
Latifa said as she laughed elegantly.

“Kanie-sama uses almost half a bottle of strawberry jam when he eats pancakes. Does using that much

make it taste better?”

“Nnn.....well, favourite food is favourite food. Is it weird?” Seiya stared in puzzlement.

“Yeah, it’s weird. Well then, no matter how much jam we have, it’s never enough.”

“Hmm.....surely one bottle is emptied every three days or so, I guess. Well, on occasions, there’s a

special sale at the neighbouring supermarket. I would feel like buying them in bulk then.”

“Then next time, allow me to make it up to you by helping out.” “Ohh. That’s greatly appreciated.”

“As simple as it gets. I like them sweet, you know?” “That so.....yeah, sweet ones it is.”

“That’s right, most certainly! Ufufufu.....”

Latifa laughing in that manner was quite rare, Isuzu had never seen it. It’s slightly humble, but altogether

pleasant, like receiving a faint gentle breeze———
“What’s so amusing? You’re the weird one.....”

Seiya was also the same. He had a gentle profile, Isuzu had only seen nothing but a serious one when he

was fully engaged in his work. “So, what’s the agenda?”

Slipping out a chuckle, he then turned to Isuzu.

“The handing over of the substitute plan. You might have forgotten, but tomorrow is the day you’ll return

to school.”

“Ohh, that’s right. Had no problems?”



“.....That’s right, as far as that goes. Fret not and continue enjoying your school life of solitude.”

Unconsciously, the steepness in her voice muffled.

Unsure of how she should report the mess caused by her own carelessness, Isuzu was at a perpetual loss.

When Kimura appeared today, things worked out amicably, a little mistake and it could had ended undesirably.

However, further reporting might spoil the mood.

Surely, it was an oversight, but it was hard to disclose it here. It was as such, the Princess having an idle

chit-chat with him about strawberry jam, but why was his head lowered as if to say things were hopeless?

He was pissed. And also remembering the feelings of guilt. “Hmm.”

Seiya flashed a carefree smile, maintaining a little silence. Isuzu, in this situation, felt a strange sense of incongruity. Before she could pry any further, he made a sudden declaration:

“Wonderful. Well then, I trust that this trend continues next week!”

While feeling the strength from her shoulders fade, Isuzu gave a stiff, bad reply.

“If it’s fine with Kanie-kun.....”

“Of course. Credit too, is attained from doing work. It’s without exception! Ku ku ku.....”

“Then, Kanie-sama..... Have you been unable to keep up with your studies?”

Latifa chided Seiya’s profuse and evil sneers. With a small gesture, Isuzu was offered a chair and was prepared a cup filled with tea.

“I have that covered. Anyhow, I’m quite brilliant.”

“It’s not just about studies. It’s an issue of morality. After all, it is sort of cheating. I’m not in a position to say anything, but———

Latifa stumbled in her speech. The teapot spilled hot water as it was held in her trembling hands.

“I really can’t say anything— but—.”

“Princess?”

“Latifa?”

Latifa dropped the teapot, and fell onto the table with a slamming violent sound. The fallen teapot had not shattered, but the boiling water spilt, soaking the mat and the coasters.

“Oi—.”

“Your highness!?”

Isuzu hurriedly helped her up, while Seiya wiped the hot water on the table top with a napkin.

“Sorry.....I’m.....fine.”

Latifa said with shallow breaths. “No, but———.”

“Really, I’m fine. This is.....not very rare.....”

Forcing a smile. Her action was rather painful to watch.

“It’s just a bout of dizziness. Head’s spinning.....strength is lost.....”

“Anyway, lie down. The bench——— no, better go to the bedroom. Which way was it? I don’t really know. Ahh———, damn it!” “This way.”

The penthouse-shaped room adjacent to the sky garden is where Latifa was staying. From the upper

reaches of the terrace, passing through a glass door, then entering a simple bedroom. Seiya carried her,

and with Isuzu’s guidance, she was laid down on the bed in the bedroom.

“Sorry.....thanks.....it’s embarrassing.....” “It’s nothing much. You’d better rest.”

“Right. Will do so.....I’d take you up on your offer.”

Afterwards, Seiya contacted Amaburi’s medical centre to inform them of the situation. At that time, it

wasn’t crowded

with casts. He was insistent on calling for an ambulance, but as Latifa kept going on with “I’m really

fine”, Seiya finally gave up on the idea.

“From what I see, the men have left.”

Isuzu was apparently unable to object to it as well. Seiya obediently returned to the sky garden. Loosening

the front of her blouse, and getting into a comfortable position, Latifa finally made a sorrowful laugh.

“I’m terribly sorry, Isuzu-san.....”

“What are you saying? It’s currently the transition of seasons, please take a slow rest.”

“Alright..... But, don’t tell anyone.” “Of course. Please be at ease.” “Please.....”

The thin fingers, tightly grasp Isuzu’s hand.

There was an uneasiness. It’s heartrending. Though it felt a little insolent, she was patted on the shoulders.

In the bedroom which imitates that of Mapleland’s royals, about 30 minutes had already passed, Latifa

had already succumbed to slumber. Gently separating from the fingers which had its strength faded, then

paying attention to the noise from the rustling of clothes while getting off the bed.

Returning to the garden with soft steps, there was Seiya’s figure with his arms folded.

He was on a vantage point, overlooking the park in silence, unmoving without so much of a twitch.

“She’s asleep.”

As he was informed, Seiya showed no response for quite some time. He appears to be in deep thought. He

would show such a behavior every now and then. Similar to the complete rejection of kind words, that

kind of sight———

“Because of that curse, huh?” He said.

“Yes. Several times last year too. But this year.....” “It’s increasing?”

“.....Yeah.”

“One way or another, the visitor count is just seems to be lacking.”
Seiya said in a gloomy voice.

“Until we’ve dealt with the fundamental problem, I can never be at peace. Still.....what’s the best I could do? Give me a clue!”

A sigh. To the point that Isuzu had never before heard. An exceedingly heavy sigh it was.

“You are in need of much more onions”, in accordance to the declaration, Moffle dragged Tiramie to the

tavern “Savage”, ordering 3 servings of Nikujaga[4], and 3 servings of seared

Shamo[5](with white onion garnish). “Come now, eat up fumo! You damned dog!”

Upon the bold statement, Tiramie knitted his eyebrows. “Ehh——? You don’t mean that, right mii——? It’s dangerous for dogs to eat onions.....”

“Damn right fumo. So chow down. Eat, and if you live, I would forgive you fumo! Die, and it’ll just be the end of a damned dog!

Just like that, it all comes to a close. That's quite about all why I'm fuming fumo!!"

"Mii——"

Although he considered crying or begging for his life, Tiramie still separated his disposable chopsticks

with a violent snap and began eating the nikujaga. Of course, onions inclusive.

"Huff, huff..... Delicious. Delicious mii——"

"Ehh?"

He Subsequently dipping the seared shamo(white onions included) into garlic soy sauce, then bringing it

to his chewing mouth.

After pouring down a grand total of 6 persons worth of shares into his stomach, Tiramie sighed a "fuwah-

"and then chugged down the contents of his high-ball glass.

"Scary onions. Hmm, this time sake is scary mii——"

"..... Alas, you're fine. What a boring outcome fumo....."

Next to Moffle who had slumped his shoulders, Macaron heed-lessly drank his beer.

"In any case, we're fairies after all. Being a dog or a sheep isn't very relevant at all ron."

"Well, that's so.....but....."

"Didn't just about everyone went to eat Jingsukan[Q17] the other day?"

"Indeed. Mutton huh fumo....."

“If you seriously think about it, It’s cannibalism ron! Puu—, ku ku ku!

Releasing this comical laughter was a sheep-type mascot munching down on yakitori. Even if unable to

follow up, no matter what sort of retort, it was still somewhat of a spectacle.

“Well then.....setting aside Tiramie’s punishments, how about we start the debriefing now fumo?”

Moffle announced, switching the mood.

“Mii— Right now?”

“Without fail fumo. Concerning that ruse during Seiya’s substitution. We were rescued from the mass

accumulation of various unforeseen developments. Point is, it had resulted in one hell of a disaster fumo.”

Macaron was about to speak, but then kept silent, “What fumo?”

“Nah, nothing at all ron. All will be revealed before long.”

“Moffu.....?”

As a strange air filled the room, Tiramie, while tampering with his smartphone, said:

“Hey! Muse whom I’ve invited by LINE said that they are coming mii—. And it seems that the other members are tagging along too mii—!”

Muse works in the attraction “Aquario” as the Fairy of Water.

Recently, the attraction had a growth in popularity. There was a rumour stating that it was due to her

costume's larger level of frontal exposure that the influence of the circulating PVs on the net, thus caused the influx in popularity count for the past three months.

Muse said that she was going to bring over her colleagues from the said attraction.

"Other members, you say?"

"The Fairy of Wind Sylphy-chan, the Fairy of Earth Kobori-chan, as well as the Fairy of Fire Salamachan mii—."

"Ahh--....."

Moffle and Macaron both let out subtle voices simultaneously.

"What's wrong mii—? They're all cute little ones, aren't they?"

"Err, Sylphy and Kobori, even Muse are fine, but....."

"Salama is awful ron. That woman can't even hold a decent conversation ron."

When the name of the Fairy of Fire, Salama, was brought up, Tiramie's expression went blank.

"Ehh— how so? Those mighty fine tits are certainly affable; an amazing little girl isn't she mii—!"

"The heck—!? You, already forgotten ron!? She caused some problems on twitter some time ago ron....."

Moffle was also aware of that incident.

It happened last year. Fairy of Fire, Salama, had guests——— a family who had somewhat poor manners.

They thrashed the performance on twitter with severe remarks like “the performance was noisy, annoying, it should just go to hell”.

That family of guests had a photograph of them without any censoring mosaic uploaded. It went as far as declaring to them “don’t come back”.

Which naturally caused a blazing uproar.

A tremendous torrents of protest mails came flooding the park.

Isuzu, who was then the park’s acting manager, uploaded letters of apology to the company site. With

Salama’s suspension and release, to some extent, the issues subsided———

““Blazingly splendid[6]. Since I’m the Fairy of Fire after all.””

Prior to the management’s order for her suspension, Salama had an aura of stodginess.

“Zero reflection was it fumo.”

“Right, totally no reflection done fumo.....”

Moffle and Macaron folded their short arms and went “uh huh” with a nod.

“.....she even went as far as hitting a guest, but, what I mean to say is, that woman is awful fumo. You

can think of it as personal justice, but, i think she’s quite the not-listening-to-people’s-opinions type. How

she’s still keeping her job is a mystery fumo.”

“I find it strange, too ron. Somehow it would be appreciated if she’d kindly leave on her own volition,

but.....”

At that point, Tiramie said.

“B, both of you. Watch your backs mii—.....”

Turning their heads, there were four beautiful girls standing at the entrance of the tatami room.

Muse with a wry smile, Sylphy, and Kobori. ——— And at the back, silently typing away at her smartphone, was the Fairy of Fire, Salama.

“Err——, we were a little late. But we’ve arrived.....”

Muse spoke in behalf of the group. They are currently dressed in simple casual wear.

“Oh, ohh.... Great that you’re here fumo. Move over move over..... There, have a seat fumo.”

The mascots made room for three more, then, the four of them sat down. A dicey, awkward air drifted

around. Their talk’s subject, Salama, without making any greetings, continued silently typing at her

smartphone.

“Errr.....did you hear all of that ron?”

“Well.....yeah. That.....”

Muse answered.

“Er,errr..... It’s just some stupid trivial talk fumo. I hope you can forget about it”

“I humbly refuse, Moffle-senpai.”

And, for the first time, Salama opened her mouth.

“This is undeserved treatment. Workplace harassment. As for the blame, I recommend you reassess on who the blame really falls unto. The text has already been composed. Would you like to go over its contents?”

“St... stop it fumo.”

“.....’When I arrived for a workplace get together, i found Mof-fle, Macaron, and Tiramie brazenly talking trash behind my back. Aren’t they too old to be saying such shameful things?

I’m seriously offended’.....desu. I’ll just hit the send button some time later.”

Salama hoisted her smartphone in the air as if it were a bomb detonator.

“C... calm down ron. We admit that we were in the wrong.

How’s that——.”

“State your conditions fumo! Let’s negotiate———”

“As I’ve always been saying, I’m the Fairy of Fire. Let’s set things ablaze. Let’s give everyone a taste of a purgatory of inferno![7]”

“Fumo—!”

Pochhh.....

And a huge tumult followed.

Salama accidentally pressed the send button. Moffle and co.

leapt at her phone but were a little too late, failing to stop the text from being sent . Scrambling for the smartphone, the table was flipped over. In the confusion, the other girls hindered Tiramie and stabbed him to death with an ice pick. To further this slapstick of events, the tatami room turned out to be “out of range” from phone signal connection. Regardless, the whole pandemonium carried on.

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Chapter 4: Let's Go To The Land Of Magic

In the office, during the afternoon of a business holiday———

“Seiya, I need the stamp fumo.”

Moffle asked, holding out the maintenance manifest for the Sweet House. Coming to an impasse while reconsidering the post-May renovation plan, Seiya, with his frustration exposed, scowled at Moffle.

“What’s the problem? Shouldn’t you be leaving that document category to Sento? I mean, I haven’t seen her since this morning. What’s that secretary doing?”

“Moffu. If it’s Isuzu, then isn’t she on some sort of business trip today? It’s written down on the whiteboard fumo.”

“What?Ahh—, you’re right. Hadn’t noticed that.”

By the entrance of the (not so spectacular) office, at the secretary’s desk separated by faded partitions was a whiteboard by the inner walls with Isuzu’s written message: “On a business trip today. Destination: Mapleland Senate, Isuzuruha Authoritarian Parliament Office. Returning tomorrow”.

Which reminds me, Isuzu was saying something along those lines yesterday. She went to investigate Mapleland’s movements involving our park.

“And that’s why I need the stamp. Wanna quickly get today’s tasks done and over with, gotta go to the Croquette Saigoutei at Komazawa fumo.”

“Be that as it may, just like I said, those things need to go through Sento first. Go to her

for immediate approval, I can't push the stamp."

Surely, as the acting manager, I have the authority to affix the stamp myself . But if I arbitrarily did so, all the blame would later fall on me. My plate's full already and I've got no time for unnecessary trouble. Furthermore, I'm not too keen on listening to Isuzu's scoldings.

"Is tomorrow no good?"

"Nope fumo. Those Diggerries are pestering me. They want it by today fumo."

"Uh huh..... But Sento isn't around, after all, and we can't do much about that."

"We can't, huh fumo....."

Moffle took out his smartphone to make a call. The call's recipient seemed to be Isuzu. After a while of waiting, he heaved a sigh, call terminated.

"Can't get through."

"Seems like she's out of range fumo.the network disturbance between the surface and the magic world has become frequent.

Damn, gotta give up on Saigoutei then..... Gonna go and directly ask her personally fumo."

"Going? Where to?"

"Ain't it obvious? Mapleland fumo."

"Can I tag along?"

“Yeah.”

Moffle answered nonchalantly.

Come to think of it, I've been hearing about this magic world for the longest time, but even the means of going there still remain a mystery to me. It's mysterious enough that I've not even tried to guess about it even once.

“This Mapleland, can an ordinary person like me even go there?”

Naturally, it piqued Seiya's interest, thus he asked.

“Yup. I think you can go with me..... If you would like to fumo”

“Nah, I've got work to do..... uh huh, however.....”

Being done with a day's worth of work and having various deliberations come to conclusions, perhaps a change of pace doesn't seem so bad.

“Alright, let's go. For once I should come and see what kind of place it is. It's good for a start.....”

“Got it fumo. Follow me then.”

Seiya conveyed to his office subordinates that he was taking his leave, got into his coat, and followed behind Mottle.

As Seiya was a realist, he had always had doubts of the existence of this “magic world”. Maybe there was a hyperspace gate-like thing under the park? If not, reciting some kind incantation from a magic book and be wrapped in light and teleported, maybe———

“Moffle-san. How’re the documents coming along mogu?”

Patriarch Taramo of the Diggerry clan called out in front of the office building.

“Right now we’re going to Mapleland to get the stamp fumo. It may be late, but I think I should be able to hand it over by today.”

As it was now, silently following Moffle, he checked his time-card with a click and then proceeded to exit the park via the employee-use gate.

There, he went to the bus stop after putting on his Lala Patch amulet.

After waiting for a brief period, the bus arrived. He then used his prepaid card to pay the fare upon boarding. Being somewhat different from the mood he imagined, Seiya was perplexed.

“Hey, Moffle.”

“Yes fumo?”

“We’re headed to Mapleland, right? Why do we have to ride a bus?”

“? It’s quite a long trip if we don’t take the bus, you know?”

“Hold it, I really don’t get it, but..... In the first place, how does one get to this land of magic?”

“Moffu. Hmm, let’s see.....starting from Amagi station^[1], travel to Inabazutsumi station^[2] then transfer to the JR Nambu line fumo. From there, go to Musashi-Kosugi, transfer to the Tokyu-Toyoko line.....”

“Wait wait wait wait.....!”

“What, don’t like the Nambu line fumo?”

Moffle frowned.

“That’s not what I meant. I mean, isn’t it Mapleland? It’s a land of magic, right? Then why... more like, isn’t there some way to get there without travelling? Some mysterious gate, teleportation magic.....”

“Haha, the hell’s that? That’s just fantasy. That Fantasia. Some light novel?”

Moffle mocked him. A habit of this strange fairy. Simply offending.

“Ughh.....”

“Anyway, once you get to the Toyoko line, go to Yokohama. And then.....ahh, forget it. Just shut your mouth and follow my lead fumo.”

As it became too bothersome to explain it, Moffle gave up and started fumbling with his smartphone, playing Freecell with his fluffy paws. As any further enquiry would be foolish, Seiya brought out a tablet PC, deciding to review the park’s past documents.

Before long, the bus arrived at Amagi station and the two of them travelled two stations along the Touto line to Inabazutsumi. After that, they then transferred to JR Nambu line. It was about 1500 hours on a working day, so the interior of the train’s carriage wasn’t very crowded and they both could find a comfortable seat.

“Moffu.....Moffu.....”

Three stations before Musashi-Kosugi, as they near Musashi-Mizonokuchi station, Moffle

started fidgeting.

“Looks like I’ll really have to go fumo.....”

Looking like he had resolved to say something, Moffle got off from the Nambu line at Musashi-Mizonokuchi station. If they were headed in the Yokohama’s direction, this shouldn’t be where they alight.

“Oi, weren’t we supposed to get off at Musashi-Kosugi?”

“Just be silent and follow me fumo.....!”

Transferring from Musashi-Mizonokuchi to Den-En-Toshi line, passing a few stations in Shibuya’s direction, then disembarking at Komazawa University station.

“Why are we stopping here?”

“Just.....!”

For some reason he had a serious expression. It was unusual to see Moffle this worried. It is unknown whether it was due to some important ritual required to get to Mapleland.

“It’s a serious matter fumo.”

From the underground station, they emerged to the surface. After walking several dozen strides from the north side turn of the route 246 national highway, they found a delicatessen with a signboard that read “Croquette Saigoutei”. Moffle entered the shop and with a complicated expression made his order.

“Snack Croquettes. 2 sets.....no, 3 sets, please fumo.”

“Ohh sure----. After a nice frying, gimme a minute to indulge in these which I have been waiting so long for.....”

“Yup, please wait.”

“Hey!”

Going out of their way just for that, Seiya, who was obediently watching at the side until now, gave Moffle a whooping.

“.....What? I had originally planned to come here when I was done with today’s work. Latifa’s croquettes are still the best. However, these snack croquettes are on par in tastiness. Point is, it’s where the dressing is not too thick. A variation which is so absurd to the extent that it comes very close to a homemade texture. Each piece of snack croquette entirely varies in its filings fumo, particularly the “Mediterranean Sea salt croquette”; it’s superb.”

Somehow, Moffle was trying to explain in an insistent tone.

“Alright, that’s enough.....”

“Seiya, you should go get some too, it’s seriously delicious fumo.”

“Nah, I’m not particularly.....”

“I’m not giving you any if you suddenly want it later, you know?”

“I told you, I don’t want any.....!”

After being kept waiting for no more than 10 minutes, they received the package of steamy croquettes. After that, they had resumed to proceed to their destination with their

itinerary(?).

Changing trains several times, they arrived at Yokohama station.

“Hmm, Yokohama, huh.....”

Seiya curiously surveyed from the side. Even if the residents of western Tokyo are not at their workplaces or at school, they don't seldom come to Yokohama. There was no particular reason, since Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, or Shibuya would mostly suffice for shopping purposes and et cetera.

Although it's somewhat normal for this metropolis to be nothing but a gigantic station.

“Don't bother looking around too much fumo. It's just like a gate to the countryside.”

“And? Where do we go now.”

“Track number 11. Come on.”

“Right.....wha?”

Then Seiya noticed the station's floor plan on the bulletin on the wall next to him. There, it showed that the platform had only 10 tracks.

Pushing through the crowd, Moffle walked on. Seiya hurriedly pursued. Walking up to the south side of the interior of the concourse, passing through the ticket barrier— in an instant, the surrounding noise felt as if it had disappeared.

“Seiya, this way fumo.”

“? Ohh.....”

The passageway went on. No, just a moment before, this passage didn't exist.....

Anyway, before the passage, there was a bulletin showing platform numbers "11" and "12". Then, descending the stairway, there was an isolated, deserted platform.

In the middle of the red sunset was an extremely deserted and old-fashioned platform.

Of course, the track on the opposite side, the Shonan-Shinjuku line's arrival and departure on the track 10 platform, was very ordinary. Furthermore, there were lots of train carriages coming and going on the other side, but for some reason, all that noise could not reach this "track 11".

"The people of the surface world are unable to notice this platform fumo.

Moffle explained.

"Once in awhile, we notice surface people losing their way, especially children fumo. Well, this is special, but not an absolute secret. Giving them sweets seems to be enough to turn them away."

"Hmmm....."

These days it's strangely convincing, because it's not unusual to have conversations about magical phenomena. The main idea would be a Harry Potter-like ride.

"Regarding this magical gimmick, no-one was bothered with it, did JR acknowledge it?"

"No idea, but perhaps not. Mapleland also seems to have financed the construction of this station."

"Is that so....."

JR is supposedly a respectable corporation. Were they really alright with accepting funding from some dubious “land of magic?” Although it was other people’s affairs, it’s becoming rather worrisome.

“When I first came to the surface, it was also through this platform. What happened afterwards was a disaster. I took the Toyoko line reaching Shibuya, that place was chaotic fumo. I was headed for Amagi, I somehow boarded Inokashira line but ended up at Kichijoji fumo. With the last train already gone and left with no other options, I had to camp out at a bench in Inokashira Park. Really, being a first-timer in a new town makes it uncomfortable, you know.”

“Ohh my.....I feel you. There was that time when I went to Umeda, Osaka, didn’t know what’s what. It felt like some kind of dungeon there.”

“Those people accustomed to Umeda would come to Shinjuku just to get lost fumo. You surface people ought to draw out a station that’s a tad bit more systematic.”

“That’ll be impossible, since it’s the era of expansion.”

“Moffu. Come now, that I know.”

Looking at the schedule, It’s one train every hour. A direct train bound for the Mapleland royal capital, Mapleburg, was expected to arrive soon.

“Any time now, come on fumo.”

As Moffle said that, a locomotive had just rolled into the platform.

A locomotive———a steam engine, specifically. It was billowing fumes from its chimney, shooting out steam and slowly decelerating as it reached the platform. Green and red polished paint, an elegant locomotive.

“Colours resembling Sasuraiger.^[3] A train splendid through and through fumo.”

I don't care whatever that Sasuraiger might be, but this train is certainly lovely. In comparison to typical steam engines that were always associated with nothing but the blackening soot and rustiness.

Passengers were shuffling to a light. There were only 2-head tall animals. Rabbits and cats, goats and pigs. There were groups of rodents that look like Moffle. Those guys seemed to have come to the surface world from Mapleland. They passed by Seiya, paying him no heed.

Then, a passenger called out to Moffle.

“Your Excellency? To be here.....is it not you, Your Excellency!?”

What appeared to be a 2-head tall, pink-coloured bear-san, lumbering on his approach.

“Indeed, it's His Excellency, General kuma! His Excellency Moffle Mel Morcenass!^[4] It has been some time!”

“Ohh.....you must be Senior Sergeant Major Gribell.”

Moffle seems to know this person.

The pink bear-san, “Senior Sergeant Major Gribell”, came up to Moffle, stood at attention, and gave him a salute with a snap.

“It's an honour to be able to meet you kuma. I was thinking of coming to the surface world for a family trip with my wife and children kuma.”

Gribell pointed behind him. Standing at a distance, bear-san's family quickly gave Moffle a bow.

“I see. No wonder you seem so excited fumo.”

“We’re planning to go to the Izu Atagawa hot springs kuma.”

“Yeah, that place is great. While you’re at it, i recommend Banana-Wani park^[5] fumo.”

“kuma, kuma, kuma (<--laughter)..... By the way, where’s Your Excellency headed to?”

“Why, got to tend to some minor business in Mapleburg. I’m in need of a small stamp fumo.”

“Is that so? But if it’s that kind of business, could you please sit down and have a few words with this Gribell. It’s a report from someone in the division kuma.”

Seemingly getting fed up, Moffle waved his paws.

“Please stop. I’m just a simple mascot in a theme park, now. That’s all there is to it.”

“But General is still ‘the’ General kuma. If Your Excellency so gives the order, wouldn’t the officers and men from our division immediately rush to your aid? Even if the ruler of Mapleburg——”

“Gribell, don’t say inappropriate things fumo.”

“Well. That is.....I’m sorry. But it’s the truth kuma. Even now, there are many who are impatiently awaiting for Your Excellency’s return.”

“I’m truly glad, but please forget about it fumo. You and I, we each have our own duties, unknown to the other.”

“The Princess, is it? That’s.....important stuff.”

“Sorry Gribell, but I trust that you won’t breathe a word to anyone about our encounter here, fumo. I don’t want to invite any unpleasant gossip or start trouble within the division.”

“Yes, sir. Well then, Your Excellency, I shall excuse myself here kuma.”

“Moffu. Wishing you good health.”

Leading his family, Gribell left the place.

“I’ve kept you waiting fumo. Shall we get going?”

“Nnn? Ohh, yeah.....”

Following that, Moffle turned towards the departing train and boarded it.

The interior of the passenger carriage was fitted with retro-style booths, wooden beddings and seats. The walls were ornamented with superior designs. Seiya and Moffle found a suitable seat and sat facing each other.

“How long will this train take? To the royal capital, I mean.”

“Around an hour or so? There’s about 10 minutes before we depart. If you need to use the toilet, you’d better do it now, as there aren’t any on this train.”

“No, I’m fine. That aside, who’s that Gribell fellow just now?”

“A former subordinate fumo.”

Moffle said as he looked through the window into the distance.

“Once upon a time, back in my military days. Back then I had to deal with dull, managerial-like stuff fumo.”

“No, I mean the things like General, Your Excellency.....”

“That, was a part of the managerial-like stuff.”

“I mean; wouldn’t one expect it to be different?”

Even Isuzu had occasionally called Moffle “General”. Nonetheless, in this shady, nonsensical magical kingdom, Moffle must be some kind of important figure, I guess?

“Moffu. Just don’t worry about it fumo.”

“Don’t worry, huh. Like the usual.”

“Yeeeaah.”

Moffle said with little thought.

“Surely, there were some things I have not talked to you about until now. I might have been dishonest, if that is any explanation at all.”

“Like what?”

“Various things fumo. Anyway, let’s eat.”

Moffle took out a plastic case from the vinyl shopping bag, offering the snack croquette

inside to Seiya.

“Don’t want it.”

“Try it, It’s delicious.”

Reluctantly, Seiya took a piece with his hand and ate it. As the oil started running down his fingers——

“Mmph. This is.....”

Delicious. Too delicious. A level on par with Latifa’s croquettes.

“Delicious, right fumo?”

“Indeed..... Wai..., it’s not like that.....!”

“I got it fumo. Let me see, what were you talking about, I wonder.....”

Moffle was deliberating as he munched on the snack croquettes. He would not talk no matter how much time passes, so Seiya directly inquired.

“To start with, what’s with this “General” thing from your stories? May I hear it?”

“Exactly as it implies fumo. In the Mapleland army, I’m a General. I Started off as a Second Lieutenant when I left the military academy. But as I’ve managed to get through various disastrous missions, I got promoted fumo.”

“Hmm.”

It was a mystery how Moffle took only a few years to climb the ranks. Rising from a Second Lieutenant to a General was supposed to amount to a significant number of years' worth of work. According to common sense of the surface world, anyway.

".....In Mapleland, even the speed of promotion is exceptional fumo. To say why it became as such, though it's embarrassing, it's due to my descent fumo."

"Descent?"

"I'm of noble descent in Mapleland fumo. For generations, my family has been serving as military personnels under the Baron house. However, even to that extent, social status won't get you that high up within the royal court. There weren't many young men who had climbed up to the top General position....."

With a whiff, Moffle let out a sigh.

"My older sister became the king's wife fumo."

"What?"

"Okisaki. Ouhi. Wife. Waifu. O-kei fumo?^[6]

"Ohh.....right."

"Even my younger brother says she's an incredibly beautiful lady. The king got struck with love at first sight during one of the banquets fumo. From that moment, for many years he had been making enthusiastic advances. At first, sister had to run from place to place. But because he's the king, she'd never be free from obstacles, right? So in the end, they got married fumo."

"Okay..... Wha.....hold up. That king, during that time and your sister gave birth to....."

“Yeah, it’s Latifa. That’s why that girl would occasionally call me “uncle” fumo.”

“So that’s why.....”

“Being the Queen’s younger brother, being a mere captain of the special forces wasn’t a good enough image. So, due to political motives, I was promoted to General at a considerably high-handed pace fumo. I was then entrusted with Mapleland’s strongest and most famous 3

rd

division. After that various other things had happened. That Gribell from before is that division headquarters’ Assistant Senior Sergeant Major, the one managing the NCO personnels fumo.”

“So in other words, he’s a veteran NCO?”

“Uh huh. At first, it was so terrible that I hated it. But now, it’s quite alright.”

Moffle laughed like a child who managed to pull a prank.

“Hmm.....”

Things had certainly been quite unclear until now. Isuzu calling Moffle “General”, Latifa calling Moffle “Uncle”. thinking that, it was all a revision.

Apparently, Moffle had a position different from the rest of the cast, although it didn’t seem so at first glance———

“You finally said something I could understand.”

“Moffu. If that’s the case, then alright.”

“But.....why would such a fine person like you end up here?”

Going as far as to ask about it... With a self-depreciative tone, murmuring “Moffu”.

“Well, Latifa had been cursed. I wanted to save my niece. Since a General has many tedious jobs, I quit the military. Now I’m here. I did the right thing fumo.”

“A former General turned into a children’s punching bag, huh?”

“Yeah. It’s quite fun, too fumo. It kinda suits me.”

At my first meeting with Moffle, there was antipathy. Then I stopped hating him. This guy has his own circumstances for working in the park.

On the contrary, could this guy by any chance be in the same state as myself——

“Or rather.....has this vehicle not departed yet fumo? Sure is odd.”

Looking at the smartphone’s clock, Moffle grumbled. That said, Seiya was puzzled as well. It had already exceeded the scheduled time as shown on the timetable just now and yet the train didn’t seem to be moving.

“Does this happen often?”

“Nope. Shouldn’t these trains be about as punctual as those on the surface world?”

“Hmm.....?”

Then, an announcement resounded in the train carriage.

““Mee—, mee—..... Err—....., thank you for riding with Japan-Maple Rails today mee—..... At approximately 1750 hours Japan time, there was an incident along the approach to Mapleburg station mee---.There will be significant delays in the train schedule

mee---. We are very sorry for the inconvenience caused mee—.””

“An incident huh.....”

“Aargh— again fumo!”

Moffle groaned provokingly.

“This damn line again. Another asshole’s suicide by oncoming train. Enough of that crap fumo!”

“S-suicide by oncoming train.....?”

Seems like in the land of magic and fairies, even suicides by oncoming trains happen as well. One hell of a pitiful dream.

“Yeah. Well, usually they don’t really die. By the way, Macaron had an acquaintance who ran a ramen shop chain and when the business failed, he took the plunge fumo. He went into a splatter about three times consecutively and marked the longest recorded distance.”

“Again, what the heck?”

“After being discharged from the hospital, he received some kind of trophy from Maple Rail fumo.”

“And that’s how the railway company shows encouragement?”

“Nonetheless, things such as confirmation of safety and the like make the schedule go way out of order fumo. If this were the surface world, recovery would be quick. If only we were prepared for it taking this long. I’m not sure though.....”

“.....How long are we going to have to wait?”

“No idea fumo. About an hour at the very least, I think.....”

“Well then, shall we wait.....”

Seiya began fumbling with his smartphone. Moffle also followed suit.

Even though an hour had already passed, there were still no signs of the train departing. “Currently, we are making haste with resolving the incident mee———” the report announcement repeated. It was all there was to it.

“Yeah. This isn’t any good.”

Even if they were to wait longer for the train to operate, it would probably be approximately 2100 hours by the time it arrived at Mapleland. At that point, even locating Isuzu to retrieve the stamp———

“At this rate, won’t we be unable to get back by today? I say, we’d better give up on going.....”

Frankly, coming all the way here and boarding the train just to see this “Land of Magic” they call Mapleland, only to cancel their plans was quite disappointing. But it couldn’t be helped. There were various conferences the next morning.

“Ohh, well fumo.....yeah. We’re going back to Amagi.”

Moffle made a phone call to Taramo, the patriarch of the Diggerry clan as he rose from his seat. They were talking about the circumstances as they disembarked the train. Then he ended the call.

“How was it?”

“Somehow, he’s apparently made an exception and gave us until tomorrow fumo. They should’ve just said so from the beginning.....”

At that moment, the large steam whistle shrieked.

The green coloured locomotive which has been parked since some time ago released steam with a shrill sound.

“”Sorry to have kept you waiting mee---. Direct train bound for Mapleburg is now departing mee—.””

Shortly following the announcement, the locomotive’s heavy wheels got in motion and departed. Slowly, then gradually speeding up. With a tail of smoke and steam, the retro train left the magic platform 11.

“It left.....”

“Uh huh. Alright, let’s head back fumo.”

Going all the way with this task, only to have to abandon it and leave was the end result. Only if Moffle hadn’t made a stopover at some croquette shop or whatever, it would have been done without such a setback.

He felt like giving a sarcastic comment, but Seiya held himself back.

Nonetheless— if not for such coincidences, if they had not encountered Gribell, then he would not have had the chance today to listen to Moffle’s life story.

Reflecting on it, be that as it may, this trip had indeed not been a meaningless one.

“What’s wrong fumo?”

“Nope. Nothing at all.”

“If you’re not satisfied, I’ll take you there eventually. Well, it’s an ordinary land of magic.”

“You just said that a land of magic is “ordinary”, what do you mean.....?”

At that time, right when it was about to change trips, an 8-car train arrived. Coming from Mapleburg on the in-bound line(?). Somehow it seemed that even that trip was affected by the incident.

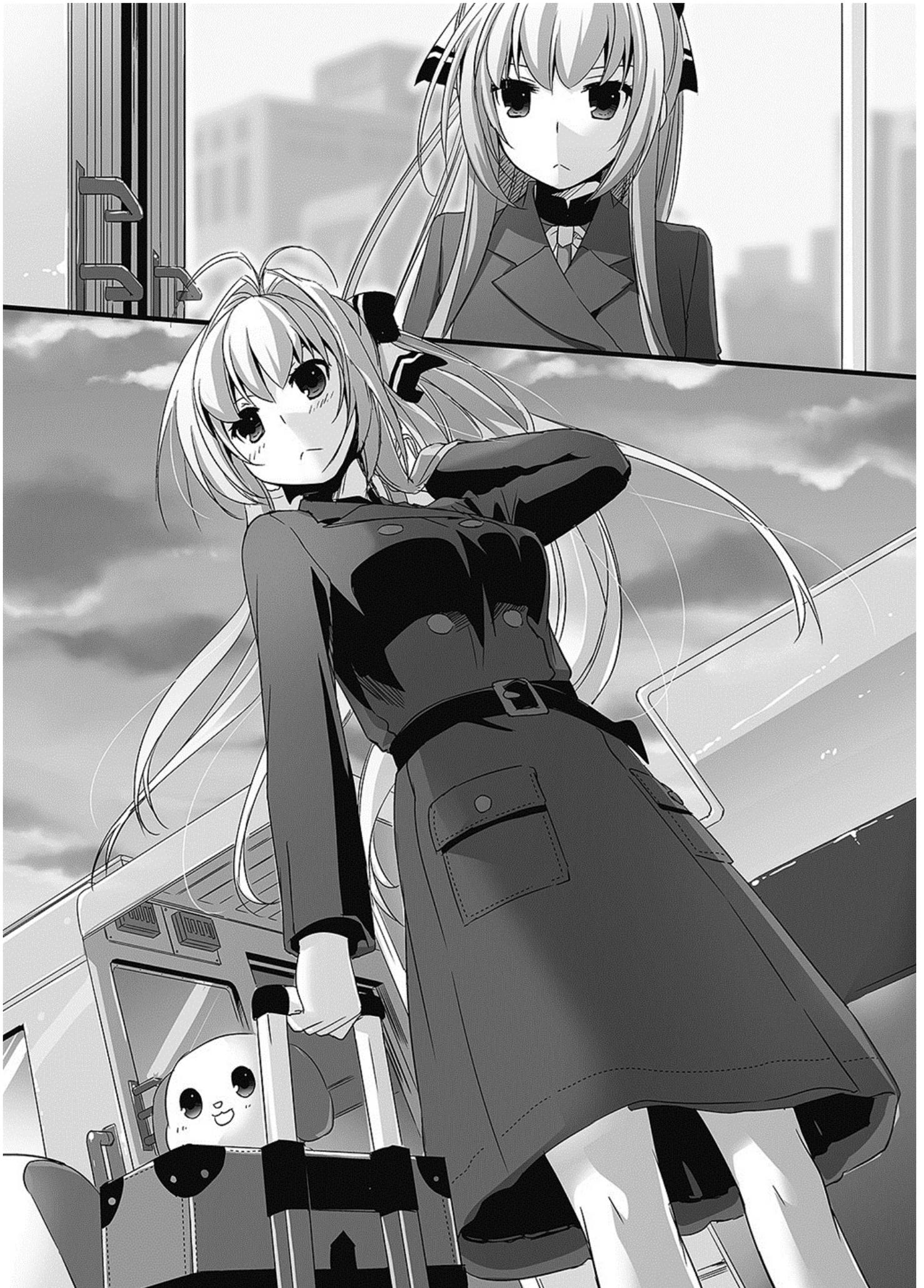
Stopping at the platform, passengers alighted. “Moffu.....?”

“What? Ohh.....it’s Sento.”

Surprisingly, among the alighting passengers was the figure of Sento Isuzu.

A red long coat, leather briefcase and a fur hat. She had the air of a military character of seemingly high social status.

“You were not staying at the other side fumo?”



“I had scheduled an early appointment, so the meeting had already ended and I came

back earlier. What are guys doing here?”

Isuzu said with a look of astonishment.

“Nothing much, those Diggerry guys were pestering me with the documents fumo. So I need Isuzu’s stamp.....”

Moffle said with an awkward expression, explaining by summarising the details thus far. Isuzu consented and nodded.

“Right. That I understand, but why did Kanie-kun come along with you all the way here?”

“Umm— What was it... a change of pace? To satisfy curiosity, how should I put it.....”

“To Mapleland?”

“Nn.....like that.”

Hereupon with a sullen look, Isuzu gave a light snort.

“Surprising. You actually have some interest in our motherland.”

“Is that a bad thing?”

With Seiya’s sultry reply, this time, Isuzu was flabbergasted.

“Nah.....not really. Justreally surprising.”

For some reason, the scene was suddenly enveloped in an awkward atmosphere. Seiya cleared his throat to change the mood and turned around.

“Th, that’s enough. Let’s return quickly. We’ve been on a fool's errand for way too long already.”

Walking away from the deserted platform behind him, Moffle and Isuzu were whispering to each other.

(.....What’s with him?)

(Who knows? Perhaps he’s disappointed that he couldn’t go to Mapleburg fumo?)

(Disappointed you say, but he doesn’t give off that vibe.....)

(That.....look here, it’s that fumo. That guy’s what you call a tsundere.)

(I’m really sorry. I’m not too well-versed with the slang youths use these days.)

“Aargh--, so annoying! You guys whine far too much! In any case, we better return quickly! Isn’t it going to be hectic starting tomorrow!?”

Seiya yelled, as he got irritated. Moffle made an expression of discontent.

“Err—, this might seem insignificant fumo..... But, could we trouble ourselves to go back to Yokohama? Why don’t we first find something to eat?”

“What about those croquettes.”

“Already finished them fumo.”

“Unnoticed!?”

Then Isuzu raised her hand.

“.....Actually, I’m hungry as well. Chinatown’s ‘Saika’^[7], I’m craving that Ebi Chilli^[8] fried dish.”

“Not you, too.....”

“You’re paying, of course.”

“Rejected!”

Seiya walked on without care. Moffle and Isuzu leaked out their discontent. While loudly complaining, the trio exited the “magic platform”.

In the end, their extended gaits brought them to Chinatown, where they ordered items like Ebi Chilli fried dish and Hui Guo Rou^[9] and conveniently lost track of time as they ate and drank. They wound up missing the last train due to zestfully indulging themselves and ended up having to wait for the first train.

Though frazzled the next morning, the halted work was put into order in the blink of an eye. It might have come from that change in pace.

The problem was whether last night’s food and beverage expenditure could be accrued— — —

¹ 甘城(Amagi). As in amaburi。Not 甘木(Amagi), the real station.↵

² 稲葉堤駅(Inabazutsumi station)[Fictional]。Not to be confused with 稲葉堤駅 (Inadazutsumi station)[Real].↵

³ Galactic Whirlwind Sasuraiger (銀河疾風サスライガー Ginga Shippū Sasuraigā?) a mecha anime series that aired from 1983 to 1984. Part of the J9 series.↵

⁴ モッフル・メル・モーセナス Moffuru meru moosenasu.↵

⁵ Atagawa Tropical & Alligator Garden (熱川バナナワニ園 Atagawa Banana Wani En?) a botanical garden with alligators located in the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park at 971-9 Naramoto, Higashiizu-cho, Kamo,Shizuoka Prefecture. Got lots of crocs there are bananas.↵

6 お妃(Okisaki)。王妃(Ouhi)。妻(Tsuma)。ワIFE(Waifu)。オーケイ。The different terms he used, first two referring to wife of a King, ie: Queen.↵

7 Chinese cuisine restaurant in Yokohama's Chinatown.↵

8 A dish that originated from sze chuan style spicy food. Imported to a Japanese style.↵

9 Twice cooked pork.↵